

ANGLO- SOVIET JOURNAL

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AND BOOK REVIEWS, ETC.

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Journal of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR

The Editor's Notebook



WE owe a word of apology to readers and to the former editor of the *ANGLO-SOVIET JOURNAL*, Mr Andrew Rothstein, for not having explained the change of editorship in our last issue. In the spring of this year Mr. Rothstein—who had long been wanting relief from the pressure of overwork—asked to be released from the editorship. In acceding to his request the Executive Committee of SCR expressed sincere thanks for the work Mr Rothstein had put into the *JOURNAL* in the years he had been editor, and endorsed the proposals he put forward on behalf of the Editorial Committee that the *JOURNAL* should be given a greater bias towards the arts, though not confining itself strictly to them. The Executive also decided to incorporate the bulletin *The Arts in the USSR* into the *ANGLO-SOVIET JOURNAL*, and appointed Mr H. C. Creighton editor in succession to Mr Rothstein.

Detective Stories and Sci-Fic

ON another page a reviewer deals with some examples of Soviet science fiction. It may interest readers that a conference on this genre was held in Moscow recently by the RSFSR Union of Writers. One reason for the meeting was the alarm felt by writers and public alike that this field was being neglected by the critics and left to develop “without sail or rudder”, as a result of which it was tending towards exclusive preoccupation with cloak and dagger thrillers about the activities of the militia and the Soviet counter-intelligence. It was felt, however, that the genre had great possibilities and could have positive educational value if the heroes were given good aims and ideals and the books portrayed flesh-and-blood characters. One view, expressed by Arkady Adamov in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* on the eve of the conference, is that Soviet detective stories should avoid the superman school and the Sherlock Holmes type of lone genius. Adventure for adventure's sake and mystery simply for the solution should be out, he thought. The detectives should be real people and not just infallible sleuths.

Other writers were concerned with the limitations of science fiction and the theory that its plots should be restricted to confirmed achievements. Vladimir Dmitrevsky, writing in *Izvestia*, felt that the weakness of stories projecting the future was their failure to portray the

man of the future. While you found detailed descriptions of space ships, cosmic landscapes and all that, you seldom learned anything about the people, or they were merely projections of the present generation. “It is impossible to create a work of art about the future of mankind”, he said, “without portraying the man of the future.” A book which he thought a bold attempt in this direction was I. Yefremov's new novel *The Nebula of Andromeda*. An excursion by Yefremov into antiquity, *The Land of Foam*, is reviewed on page 33.

Cultural Workers in Congress

IN preparation for the forthcoming Soviet Congress of Trade Unions, the different unions have been holding their own congresses and conferences. The current *SCR Medical Bulletin* deals with points of interest made at the conference of the Medical Workers' Union. Here we shall touch on a few from those of the Union of Cultural Workers and the newly formed Union of Educational and Scientific Workers.

The Union of Cultural Workers rivals Mr Cousins's Transport and General Workers in size, reporting 1,227,112 members. The occupations which it embraces can be judged from the fact that the delegates included sixty-three actors and other art workers, thirty film makers, forty-nine workers from clubs, libraries, museums and the radio, fifty-four workers, engineers and technicians, forty-two print workers and booksellers, eighteen editorial workers, and eight lecturers and students from cultural educational institutions.

The Minister of Culture, N. A. Mikhailov, reported on the plan for cultural developments for 1959-65—expansion of film studios, new theatre buildings and companies, symphony orchestras, etc., and promised more support for amateur music, especially for choral societies, symphony orchestras and brass bands. He had a word to say about gramophone records, agreeing with critics of them and condemning the low technical and musical quality of many of the recordings being put out by various local co-operatives. Plans were in hand, he said, to reorganize production and modernise and expand existing factories. The point has interest because we understand that British recording equipment has been bought and is expected to

bring about a marked improvement in the quality of long-playing records.

The founding congress of the Union of Educational and Scientific Workers brought together more than sixteen unions to form what must be one of the biggest trade unions in the world, with 3,650,000 members. The chairman, I. I. Grivkov, dwelt in some detail on the union's international connections and role in cultural relations. It had links with the International Federation of Teachers' Unions and the World Federation of Scientific Workers, he said, as well as with trade unions in many countries. He promised closer co-operation with them in the future, and called on local bodies of the union to take more part in international work. Many of them corresponded with foreign countries, but they should do more to encourage teachers and scientists who have been abroad to write about their visits in the local press and to speak about their travels at schools, institutes and meetings. Mr Grivkov stressed the value of the exchange of delegations between unions, and thought their exchange of tourist groups (on an equal and reciprocal basis) particularly fruitful.

Cultural Relations

AN extended correspondence on cultural relations has been going on this year between the Soviet Relations Committee of the British Council and the Foreign Office on the one hand and the Soviet State Committee for Cultural Relations on the other, a correspondence punctuated from time to time by press statements and the publication of articles in the press.

It arises in part from the fact that agreements on exchanges were signed by the USSR with France in September 1957 and with the USA at the beginning of 1958. From the Soviet side it was suggested that a similar agreement, codifying cultural relations, might be signed with Great Britain. For their part the Foreign Office and the Soviet Relations Committee suggested in April that talks be held on an agenda that included such points as the cessation of jamming BBC broadcasts in Russian and the "organisation of Anglo-Soviet exchanges through representative channels" (*Manchester Guardian*, June 28, 1958).

The correspondence has not furthered cultural relations; at best it has left the position as it was, with a number of points, such as an arrangement for British students to study in the USSR, left unresolved. The Foreign Office view, expressed in a statement issued on June 27, is "that Russia has rejected a British proposal for talks on the freedom of information exchanges between the two countries". The Government, it said, "holds the view, which is shared by the Soviet Relations Committee of the British Council, that any discussion of a long-

term plan for organised exchanges in the cultural and other fields on the lines proposed earlier by the Soviet authorities should be left in the context of a new effort to remove the main barriers, which exist on the Soviet side, to a closer understanding between the Soviet and British peoples."

The Soviet view, on the contrary, is that the British side has rejected a cultural agreement by making it conditional upon the settlement of a number of complicated political questions. In a letter to the Soviet Relations Committee, the acting Chairman of the USSR State Committee for Cultural Relations, A. Kuznetsov, wrote on July 7: "A definite agreed programme of measures to cover a long period would greatly facilitate a considerable extension of cultural, scientific and technical contacts and would remove the spasmodic and haphazard features that are characteristic of these relations at the present time. . . . In view of this we cannot but be surprised at your reluctance to impart an organised character to cultural contacts between Britain and the Soviet Union, especially in circumstances in which both the British public and the public in our country are showing great interest in cultural and scientific achievements in the two countries."

An interesting sidelight is thrown on this by Mr. A. Solodovnikov, director of the Moscow Art Theatre, in an article in *International Affairs*, No. 6, 1958, in which he comments on some of his experiences when here to prepare for his theatre's visit. We regret that space permits us only to refer readers to his article.

Lenin Prizes

IN our last issue we published a postscript to Mr Daglish's piece on Soviet novels about the disappointment that had been expressed in the USSR that no prizes had been awarded for literature or cinema. The committee replied to these criticisms with a forthright press statement vindicating its decision. It recalled that "excessive generosity and haste" had been displayed in the award of Stalin Prizes, "as a result of which prizes were awarded, in addition to really outstanding works, to some that had little significance or were even poor". The new rules required exacting selection of candidates, a broad public discussion of all proposals prior to adjudication, a high sense of responsibility, and the absence of haste in the committee's work. It then explained that some of the works which critics thought should have been honoured were in fact not yet known to the public in finished form and would qualify for consideration when they were completed.

Soviet Music Today

Dmitry Shostakovich

1

Closer to the People

CREATIVE work without a close link between the writer, artist or composer and the life of his people is sterile. He who feels the heartbeat of the people and the breath of the present will give active expression to their thoughts; without this, great works of realistic art are impossible.

We have many good works in every field of art, and Soviet people are justly proud of them. The Communist Party, which supports us composers in difficult times, creating all the conditions for creative work, is helping us to correct mistakes. That is why an artist's responsibility to his people is so great. That is why we argue so heatedly and with such personal interest about the important problems of our art.

Composers often speak of using revolutionary songs and folk melodies in various works. There are so many beautiful and often undeservedly forgotten songs by unknown poets and musicians. These songs have inspired people to great deeds, have inspired generations of progressive people in their struggle, have sung of our native Russian land with its endless steppes and forests.

It is quite natural that composers should often use the melodies of these songs in their works. But we are not always able to feel that they are really our own, to see them through the prism of our own creative world outlook. In such cases these songs appear as artificial numbers or quotations, by no means producing a feeling of the epoch the music is singing about. A composer of any professional skill, of course, can elaborate the melody of any song and heighten it by orchestral colour. But it will become a vital part of an opera or a symphony only if he has deeply felt all the thematic material of the composition and sweated to embody it. Only then will the song become an organic and integral part of his music. No one will ever say, listening to such music, that the song is merely a quotation.

One must have consistency and integrity in one's work. One cannot live by compromises; one cannot imitate what is crude and justify oneself by asserting that the simpler the piece the more understandable it is, and that anything complicated would be over the listener's head. The crude approach is the enemy of art, as are the abstruse, the mediocre and the platitudinous. It is impossible for an artist not to seek new paths and to advance his art; but this searching for something new must be coupled with a striving to reflect the innermost thoughts of the people in one's art.

We are against simplification of musical language; we are for that ideal simplicity which has been characteristic of all truly talented artists, which has borne witness not to their crudity, but, on the contrary, to the wealth of their spiritual world. There lies the source of true innovation. Our contemporaries will listen to such music and understand it, and that should be the aim of every composer.

I do not think there are any sour notes in an orchestra. Every sound is good when it tallies with the content. And there are no poor musical means in music. But there are inept composers who make poor use of the orchestral palette. A composer must be able to express his thoughts clearly and make use of the great possibilities of orchestration, as Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Chaikovsky and the classics of western music knew how to do.

This reminds me of the words of Rimsky-Korsakov : “ How wrong many people are when they say that such-and-such a composer is a wonderful arranger, or that such-and-such [an orchestral] work is excellently arranged ! They do not realise that arrangement is only one aspect of *the soul of the work itself*.”

It could not be better said ! It is the “ soul of the work itself ” that the composer expresses in his orchestration, through means fitting his own individual manner and best suited to the style and content of the work.

Music and song accompany man from the day he is born to the day he dies. Truly, without music there is no life. Then let us strive to make music that will beautify our splendid Soviet life and make it better still, and see that our songs really “ help us to build and live ”.

I am very distressed by the fact that some of our young people have such a liking for the mediocre tunes and tearful love-songs which pour in turbid waves from variety stages, and sometimes from the radio, and even now and then from cinema screens. It is our duty to counteract this with something else, with healthy art. We must write more good songs about love, about friendship and comradeship, about the fine and beautiful experiences of youth. We must create heroic songs about the great feats of the people who gave their lives on the battlefield for the freedom and independence of our country. We must have songs about the conquerors of the virgin lands, about the courageous builders who are putting up power stations on the turbulent Angara, and about those whose labour is changing the face of the dense taiga and the lifeless deserts. Just as we need “ civic poetry ” praising the lives and deeds of our working people, so we also need songs about them, about the ordinary people who are doing such a great job.

The development of good taste in music must begin in childhood, and if we still have too few good new songs why not bring schoolchildren up on the wonderful old Russian folk songs, or the songs of the peoples of all our fraternal republics ? There is never a hint in folk songs of banality, cheapness or bad taste ! And folk songs are not as a rule very difficult to learn.

The recently formed choral society is destined to play an immense role in the musical education of the people. In particular it must bring about the introduction of compulsory singing lessons in all classes of secondary schools. Singing will broaden the outlook of our schoolchildren and young people, and will give them a more serious and deeper appreciation of music, make it a daily cultural necessity. Then our Soviet musical heritage will make still greater progress and conquer new heights.

The cinema too must play a great role in this. We are putting out close on 100 feature films a year, and soon there will be considerably more. Yet how few good films there are, and how few good songs are heard from the screen ! We have splendid song-writers, whose songs are liked and sung by the people. The film studios should call in not only the old musicians and poets, but also the young ones, who would create melodious songs.

Good songs of all kinds—heroic, lyrical, comic and satirical—should be used in the ideological “ arming ” of the Soviet people against what is bad and banal, against what debases people’s taste and inculcates bad habits.

We must seriously discuss the question of day-by-day propaganda for the work by Soviet composers and the treasures of classical art. The work of concert and variety organisations in the capitals, and especially in small towns, should be improved. Too often, because the directors of clubs or parks wink their eyes at it, and are not exacting in their demands, banal hack works which arouse the listeners’ indignation are played.

Our concert organisations can draw on first-class performers of every kind.

Each year young Soviet musicians win honours at international competitions and festivals. The number of gold medals, diplomas and prizes won is increasing year by year, but the number of good, well-planned concert programmes adapted to each audience lags somewhere far behind.

Of course, established and younger artists tour the virgin lands and other formerly desert regions now being developed. But how few are the concert tours, compared with the needs and desires of the people! The Ministry of Culture of the USSR should be far more energetic in organising concert and theatre tours in the remote parts of the country.

Moscow, Leningrad, the capitals of the Union republics, and the larger cities, must be more generous and share with the rest of the country what has been created by the culture of the Soviet people.

The best singers and musicians, actors, dancers and variety artists must all take an active personal part in the offensive against the banal and the bad, still sometimes to be heard from our stages.

These important questions should perhaps be discussed at meetings of artists. I think that every Soviet artist, whatever his position or age, however busy he may be in theatre or conservatoire, will respond to the spiritual needs of our immense audience and do his creative bit for the further development of our multi-national culture. Meetings with the people, talks and discussion with our people, will enrich their mastery of art a hundredfold and inspire them to new creative success.

From *Izvestia*, 8.1.58. Slightly abridged.

2

The World Prestige of Soviet Art

I HAVE been deeply moved by the manifestations of the Communist Party's care and attention for Soviet music and Soviet composers. The Central Committee resolution of May 28, 1958 [see p. 30], made me happy, first and foremost because it stresses the high place Soviet music rightly takes in the promotion of socialist culture. The resolution wipes out the unfair and sweeping appraisals of various Soviet composers, and opens up wonderful prospects for the further advance of Soviet music along the path of realism. The exceedingly high ideological, moral and ethical standard of this resolution delights us Soviet musicians and all the legions of admirers of Soviet music.

Soviet music, to which I and many of my comrades devote all our energies, enjoys just recognition in musical circles abroad. Many professional musicians and music-lovers are interested in our works. Our point of view on questions of innovation, realism and national character is sincerely supported by many progressive musicians in western Europe. When I was in Italy and France recently I talked a lot with musicians. I was delighted to see their great interest in the musical and æsthetic problems which we Soviet composers raise. Eminent French maestros are profoundly alarmed over the future of musical composition in the West. They are perturbed by the spread among the youth of spurious *avant-garde* tendencies, like the notorious dodecaphony and *musique concrète*. This stillborn art finds no response with broad audiences, and bears witness to the ideological impasse and crisis of bourgeois culture. This kind of music is an extremely unhealthy and uninteresting phenomenon. The most honest-minded artists in the West are perseveringly seeking a way out of the impasse, studying the fruitful experience of Soviet music.

The Central Committee resolution of May 28 puts forward great new tasks in the field of propaganda for music. We want Soviet music played more

widely and more regularly in our concert halls and opera houses. We must create a musical "sounding board" on which to try out more and more good new works. It is reported that eighty new operas, fifty symphonies and many other works are currently being composed in all the republics of the USSR. Not all of them, probably, will be very striking or talented. But whatever is professionally competent must be played without fail. I would like to appeal to our music theatres, philharmonic societies, radio, and to all whose duty it is to propagate Soviet music, to be sure to play Soviet music more. It must ring out and find a response among our listeners. It must receive honest and highly professional criticism. Then in the next few years we shall see the appearance of a number of valuable new Soviet operas, the operas our people have long been expecting.

A few words about our music criticism.

The several sweeping and unfair evaluations mentioned in the resolution of May 28 fettered the creative thought of critics and musicologists. Now that these mistakes have been corrected, they must flex their muscles and sharpen their pens so as to assess more exactly, with more principle and from a Party position of high ideals, everything that composers are writing. Such friendly, highly professional and effective criticism is as necessary to us as air. The historical path traversed by Soviet music must be studied, and many valuable works undeservedly forgotten must be revived. This applies to operas, to symphonic and chamber music, to songs and love-songs.

It is a task of paramount importance to inculcate a good æsthetic taste in our youth. Propaganda for good music should start at the school desk, in the lowest form in school, so that children study the rudiments of music and learn folk songs and the finest works of world and Russian and Soviet music. This will help introduce millions of our citizens to the riches of music culture.

From *Pravda*, 13.6.58.

3

Interview

IN June Dmitry Shostakovich made a short visit to Britain to attend the Encænia of Oxford University, where he was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Music. During the few days he was here Shostakovich gave this interview to the ANGLO-SOVIET JOURNAL. Most photographs of the composer, we found, do not do him justice, do not convey any impression of his restless, even nervous, energy. The drawing by Stanley Parker which was published in the *Sunday Times* (and made during our interview) seems to catch the image of Shostakovich better.

Our interview was short and businesslike, because time pressed.

Opening with a brief reference to the increasing popularity of his music in Great Britain, we asked Shostakovich what he was working on now and what were his plans as a composer. He replied that he preferred to talk about what he was doing rather than about his future plans. He had many, many ideas for works, but not all of them would be realised. He often received letters, he said, enclosing newspaper cuttings which said he was working on such and such a project, and asking him what had happened to it. But it had only been an idea and had not been carried out.

As for an evaluation of his work, Shostakovich said he could not do that, but could only say what he was doing and what he hoped to do.

At present he was working on an operetta. "Why an operetta?" many people asked him. "And why not an operetta?" he replied. Operetta, light

opera, he maintained, is an important and serious sphere of music, just as important as grand opera, oratorios, symphonic music and so on. Shostakovich's operetta is entitled *Moskva-Cheryomushki*. Its action is set in Moscow and the new south-west district rising around the University and the Academy of Sciences. The libretto is by Mass and Chervinsky, two popular writers of comedies.

His other current preoccupation is a new edition of Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*. This had been left unfinished, and had been edited and prepared for the theatre by Rimsky-Korsakov. As with *Boris Godunov*, Rimsky-Korsakov had made changes in Mussorgsky's score; Shostakovich did not consider that all Rimsky-Korsakov's changes were correct or justified. "I have a great admiration for Rimsky-Korsakov's version," he said, "but even more for Mussorgsky's original score. I am working on completing the opera, have written a finale for it which I hope is in the spirit of the original, and am restoring Mussorgsky's orchestration." The opera has five acts, and Shostakovich has now finished work on three and a half. We asked if it was planned to produce it at the Bolshoi Theatre, and Shostakovich said it was hoped to do so, but that the main idea at the moment was to make a film of the opera.

This answered our second question, which was that we had heard that he was working on an opera, and could he say what it was and when it would be produced. Shostakovich said he was not working on any other operatic work.

We then asked what he considered to be the significance for Soviet music of the recent decision of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party correcting its 1948 resolution on Muradeli's opera *Great Friendship*. This new resolution, Shostakovich replied, was a very right and just decision. The 1948 resolution had said many correct things about the national folk character [*narodnost*] of music, and about the great significance to Soviet music of the heritage of classical music, especially Russian classical music. But it had also contained unjust statements about outstanding Soviet composers like Prokofiev, Shebalin, Myaskovsky, Popov and others. Shostakovich said he did not include himself, as he did not consider himself a great composer, but he was none the less personally pleased with the decision. By correcting the mistakes it had given great happiness to Soviet composers. "I am sure", Shostakovich said, "that they will compose many wonderful pieces and new works under the influence of this resolution." He added that he would like to stress that it showed how much attention the government and central committee paid to Soviet music and composers.

Our next question touched on Shostakovich's remarks on the teaching of singing as an important means of enhancing musical appreciation, made in the article which we publish on page 3. Singing was now being widely taught in the schools, he said, and the government had issued a decree on musical education in the general schools. The decree had not been carried out well in every part of the country or in all schools. The position was good in Moscow and Leningrad and other big cities, but not everywhere. But after all, theirs was a very big country. However, measures were being taken to provide all schools with well-qualified singing teachers. The Ministry of Culture was paying close attention to the teaching of music in the schools and to providing teachers. It was hoped that this problem of general musical education would be resolved in the next two or three years. Shostakovich added that he not only thought it *would* be solved, but that it *had* to be, for "the future of music depends on it".

Remarking how anxious musicians and music lovers were to meet him and to hear him play, we asked whether he would be coming back to England

soon. "Yes", he said. "I hope to return in January of next year, and negotiations for concerts and recitals are in progress."

Our last question concerned the Chaikovsky piano and violin competition held in Moscow in the spring, of the organising committee of which Shostakovich had been chairman. He was happy, he said, that it had been his idea to hold this competition every four years, and he was very glad that the proposal had been accepted. "I am very proud", he went on, "that the competition discovered and brought to light such outstanding performers as Van Cliburn, Liu Shi-kun [the Chinese winner of second place in the piano competition], the young Soviet pianist Lev Vlasenko, and the violinists Klimov [USSR], Pikeisen [USSR] and Stefan Rucha [Rumania]." He was sorry they had had only eight prizes to award. He would have liked to see more of the competitors honoured, as there had been many very good musicians among those who did not gain prizes. "I wish them all the best of success in the next competition", he said.

The Chaikovsky competition will be held again in the spring of 1962. Shostakovich regretted that there had been so few entries from Great Britain in the first. We had to admit that publicity for it here had been inadequate, and that the SCR should have done more to make it known among young British musicians. Our interview ended on our concurrence in Shostakovich's hope that there will be more effective publicity next time.

London, June 1958.

Stanislavsky at Rehearsal

V. O. Toporkov

During the Moscow Art Theatre's memorable season at Sadler's Wells Theatre, members of the company spoke about their work at a public meeting sponsored by SCR. At this meeting, the author of this article, a senior member of the company, read out an extract from his book "Stanislavsky at Rehearsal" to illustrate Stanislavsky's method. We reproduce the extract here. Introducing it, Mr. Toporkov explained that he had originally been sceptical of Stanislavsky's ideas, but having seen their results had been converted to his school and had joined the Moscow Art Theatre. In this extract from his book, Mr. Toporkov describes how Stanislavsky worked with a young actor, B. Y. Petker, who had recently joined the Art Theatre and was being trained for a role in "Dead Souls."

B. Y. PETKER, who like myself had come to the Moscow Art Theatre from the Moscow Comedy Theatre (formerly Korsh's), was being trained as a second player for the part of Plyushkin.

Then a young actor, he had played character parts very successfully, and when the question came up of finding someone to double for Leonidov the choice fell upon him. Incidentally, in this way Stanislavsky had an opportunity of getting to know the new actor in the course of practical work.

After some preparatory work with Y. S. Telesheva and V. G. Sakhnovsky, who were producing the play, a rehearsal with Stanislavsky was fixed for him.

Petker was called an hour or two earlier [i.e. earlier than the writer—Trans.], and what took place during my absence I know about from Petker's own words.

Precisely at the appointed time Petker went in at the gate of a small courtyard, where Stanislavsky was sitting at a table under a large canvas umbrella. Near him sat Telesheva and Sakhnovsky. A little farther off were the designer Simov and the Turkish producer Muskhin-Bey, in Moscow for a theatre festival; he was interested in matters of the producer's technique, and had obtained Stanislavsky's permission to be present at the rehearsal.

Stanislavsky greeted Petker very politely, and introduced him to Simov and Muskhin-Bey.

After a short pause he turned to the producers and asked them to tell him how the rehearsals had been going, where the actor was succeeding and where he was having difficulty.

After hearing reassuring answers to a number of the questions he put, he asked "And what about age? After all, Plyushkin is supposed to be at least seventy. That's a very difficult thing to do." But on this point, too, the producers tried to reassure him. "Boris Yakovlevich* reincarnates himself very well", they said, "He's played old men often, and is quite used to it."

"Hm! Hm! . . . I'm very much afraid that it may be a case of 'acting an old man' to make people think, 'Look, he's only a young chap, and how well he acts an old man'. That's not good enough at all, and of no interest compared to Gogol's character, which is the incarnation of worldly avarice. . . . Well, let's begin. Take any part of that scene. Vasili Grigoryevich,† remind me of the lines. I shall be Chichikov. Right, now let's start."

To the best of his ability, using tried and tested devices, Petker endeavoured to portray a senile, miserly old man.

* Petker.—Ed.

† Sakhnovsky.—Ed.

Stanislavsky, giving him his cues, watched him closely, then stopped and asked him a question. "Who are you talking to? Who's this sitting in front of you?"

"Konstantin Sergeyevich Stanislavsky."

"Oh no it isn't. It's a crook."

"I beg your pardon?"

"There you are. You're already looking at me with more attention than when we were acting the scene. Now there's something alive in your eye. If I'm a well-known crook, how are you going to look at me while we talk? Right, now just look at me as if I'm a crook. Try to guess my plans in advance, decide what I'm up to. What if I have a knife hidden on me? Remember where all the things in your yard are, which of them you're most anxious about. Don't act anything, just work things out for yourself. You keep wanting to act something. You can't act anything yet, you must accumulate ideas."

At this point Stanislavsky reached out for his pen, which was lying on the table, meaning to make a note, but Petker quickly snatched it up and put it to one side.

"Quite right. Now try to guess what else I mean to do. Keep an eye on me. No, don't act someone watching, really watch me. There he goes, acting again! Come for a stroll round the yard. I'm a neighbour of yours, and this is your place. Tell me with plenty of detail what is what and where. What is that shed over there?" he asked seriously, pointing to an outhouse.

Petker answered in general phrases, but Stanislavsky refused to be satisfied with these, and inquired more and more persistently about every detail.

At this moment a loaded cart drove into the yard. Stanislavsky at once went over to it, asking as he went what it was they were delivering and what it was for.

Petker provided the explanations. He listened carefully, but would put further questions and not leave off until he had been given a properly thought out reply. So they walked up and down the yard, playing their game in a very serious tone of voice, then they sat down at the table and went on with their conversation on farming topics—the hay, the harvest, the peasants, etc.

While this conversation was going on I arrived for rehearsal. Seeing Stanislavsky deep in earnest conversation with Petker, and having no idea that this was part of the rehearsal, I halted at a distance, waiting for a convenient moment to greet them.

With a quick glance at me, Stanislavsky whispered softly to Petker: "Look who's arrived. Be on your guard with him. Don't let him get too close to you—he's a crook."

I realised at once what was happening, and joined in the game.

Leaving the field to us, Stanislavsky quickly changed back from being a landowner to being a producer, and began to watch us carefully.

I went towards Petker, and he quickly jumped up and ran off.

"Hm! Hm! 'Acting', Boris Yakovlevich. All you need do is move away a few paces, that's all. Now, go up to him again, Vasilj Osipovich.* Hm! Overacted again! At that rate Chichikov will see at once that you're afraid of him; just do what you need to for your own safety."

Gradually Petker and I got a conversation going, at first improvising our own words, then switching to the author's text. Stanislavsky interrupted us every time the conversation took on the form of stage acting and lost its organic flow. Again and again he brought us back to the truth.

"You don't have to act anything. Just listen and be thinking of which way Chichikov is leading the conversation. All I want at present is your attention. . . . Try to guess why this uninvited guest has come to see you. Now invite him to sit down. . . . No, not like that; he could stick a knife into you,

* Toporkov.—ED.

couldn't he ? . . . Not like that either. Find a way that's less awkward—and safer."

Step by step Stanislavsky dug down to all that was alive in the actor, getting rid of all that was histrionic, run of the mill, theatrical. Petker's "old man's style" gradually disappeared, and a living face with an attentive, mistrustful eye began to show through. I presumably responded to him in the same way, and the two of us sensed the threads of mutual interest in one another linking us together.

I began cautiously to explain my business. He listened to me, trying to fathom its meaning.

Our tiny audience listened to our conversation, tracing its development.

The moment came when Petker-Plyushkin grasped the full extent of the benefaction that was being proposed to him ; and after Chichikov's line "Out of respect for you I shall also take upon myself the expense of the bill of sale", his face seemed to light up. He looked at me for some time in silent amazement. Our audience waited with interest to see what would happen next.

Petker's face twitched convulsively. Stanislavsky, who had sat silent until then, trying not to interrupt the scene once it had got on the right rails, said quietly :

"Now act, act with your face, act as much as you like. You've earned the right to do it now. Wrinkle it up as far as you can. Stick your tongue out . . . farther . . . farther . . . Don't be afraid of it now. . . . That's right!"

As he spoke he was laughing cheerfully, and everyone around was laughing too. With that he closed the rehearsal.

"That will do ; very nice. . . . Do you realise how carefully you have to feel your way towards a role, to weave fine spider's webs, weave them very cautiously and not rush into those fine intricacies straight off ? Later on they'll twine themselves into a firm cable that it will be hard to break. Go on working, don't force anything, take it gently, using the simplest organic actions of life as your points of departure. Don't think about the figure as a whole yet. The figure as a whole will make its appearance if you act correctly in the hypothetical circumstances of the part. You've just seen an example of how you can cautiously blaze yourself a trail, going from one little truth to another, how you can check up on yourself, open up your imagination, and come to a striking, expressive scenic action. Go on working in that spirit. Do you understand what you have to do ? " he asked, turning to the producers. "In a little while you must come and show me it again."

But as it turned out we did not have occasion to show that scene to Stanislavsky again. He was busy with other matters. Once he rang me up and cross-examined me about how the role was developing in Petker's hands. Our telephone conversation went on about two hours. One could feel his immense interest in both the part and the new actor. It was difficult for me to answer him, as I was in a rather ticklish situation. If I were to tell him nothing but reassuring things he would stop believing me, would begin putting questions with traps in them and tripping one up on words like a prosecuting counsel ; but if I were to talk of shortcomings and the negative side of things, that would mean "scuppering" a comrade and unduly disturbing Stanislavsky.

I manœuvred as well as I could. In answering a question on the business of putting across old age, which was worrying him, I tried too hard. I said "Well, you needn't worry about that. Petker manages the job magnificently. It's quite surprising how he succeeds in showing you an old, old, sick man."

"Hm ! Hm ! That's terrible, if he makes him a sick man. What sort of sickness ? Mental ? Then I'm not interested. The idea here is that Plyushkin is possessed by the passion for accumulating goods. He is another Chichikov, in his old age. He has no flexibility in his joints, he can't get up and sit down or

walk quickly, he sees badly—but that's all ; and as for the rest he's quite healthy and normal."

"You must have us up to see you, Konstantin Sergeyevich. We'd like to show you that scene again."

"I'll do what I can, but you can see how it is. There's never any time, and other things to do—I don't know if I shall manage it. But you ring me up, and tell me what's going on there between you. You're the same, though you hide things from me all the time . . . Hm ! Hm ! You just give me all the scandal straight out, eh ? "

"Very well, Konstantin Sergeyevich."

"Goodbye, then."

* * *

Stanislavsky's concern for the actor extended far beyond the confines of the theatre. Knowing very well just how important an influence all manner of things can exert upon the way an actor feels, and the way he works, he kept a sharp eye on everything that made up the actor's environment outside the walls of the theatre, everything that could influence him for good or ill. Constantly concerned to help an actor in any way possible when he was passing through a difficult period, he never missed an opportunity to help one out of a hole. And this applied not only to the leading group, but also to actors occupying humble positions, especially the young ones.

During my service as manager of the company I had occasion to talk to Stanislavsky about the actors in it. These talks were often over the telephone. He had an excellent knowledge of who could be useful to the theatre, in what way and to what extent, and would try to transmit this knowledge to me in our talks.

"To create a lofty art, you need colours of the most varied shades. Some, perhaps, may not be required very often, but you must still have them on hand and look after them. The Art Theatre has the right to do that. Our palette is the company. Each actor is precious, just like a special, unrepeatable colour. You must treasure him, however humble his position. It's not easy for us to find a replacement for him. He's been reared in the walls of this theatre, he's soaked in its spirit.

"Your duties include taking care of the most precious thing in the theatre, without which it is not a theatre—the actor. That care shouldn't just express itself in big and important matters, but in all the petty little things connected with the actor's daily life. Do you realise how great a responsibility rests upon you ? "

Translated by R.K.

Forgotten Pages of English Poetry

A. Nikilyukin

The Poetry of the Corresponding Societies

THE popular poetry created in England during the period of the industrial revolution has, up till now, been not only not studied, but even not collected. Folklorists and students of English literature alike have forgotten its existence. Bourgeois scholars who devote special research to minor problems of the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries pass over in silence the existence of the poetry in the popular newspapers and journals, and also in the numerous pamphlets and broadsheets issued during the widespread democratic movement of the end of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth.

The authors of most of the songs, satires, epigrams and other popular verse are unknown. Some of the songs which persisted among the people, acquiring numerous variants, have become folk songs. Popular poetry stands on the line dividing literature from folklore. It played an important role in the social struggles of the period and exerted a definite influence on the revolutionary romantic poetry of Shelley and Byron and is today part of the literary heritage of the past.

A major contribution to the study of English literature has been made by the collection of articles "From the History of Democratic Literature in England from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century", edited by M. P. Alexeev and published in 1955.* O. Kovalnitskaya, in an article in the collection written on the basis of new material discovered by her in Leningrad libraries, analyses many forgotten forms of English satire of the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth.

The present article is written on the basis of the very rich collection of English democratic periodicals and broadsheets of this period preserved in the library of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism. This new material has hitherto been unknown to historians of English literature both in our country and in England itself.

English popular poetry of the period of the industrial revolution shows a clear division into two periods: the first embraces the popular poetry of the Corresponding Societies of the end of the eighteenth century, and the second the popular poetry of the tens and twenties of the nineteenth century.

* * * * *

The beginning of the English working-class movement goes back to the nineties of the eighteenth century, a period when for the first time in history there appeared political societies created by the workers and artisans themselves—the Corresponding Societies. The history of the English working-class movement during the period of the French Revolution has for a long time been subjected to falsification by bourgeois historians. Study of this early period of the working-class movement in England has made it possible to present in an historically concrete manner the development of the poetry of the Corresponding Societies, as a reflection of the English workers' struggle for their rights.

Popular poetry is found in the periodicals published by the leading figures of the Corresponding Societies in London and the provinces—Thomas Spence,

* *Iz istorii demokraticeskoi literatury v Angli XVIII-XX vekov* pod red. M. P. Alekseeva. Moskva 1955.

John Thelwall, James Montgomery and others. The verses which appear in their journals—*Pig's Meat* (1793-1795), *Politics for the People* (1793-1795), *Tribune* (1795-1796)—comprise the central core of all the popular democratic poetry of England of the nineties of the eighteenth century, and are remarkable for their very pronounced political trend.

The poetry of the Corresponding Societies was influenced to some extent by old folk songs and the songs of the workers' trade unions. Popular poetry was also affected by the many-sided influence of the literature of enlightenment, which was widely publicised in the newspapers and journals of the Corresponding Societies. Excerpts from the literature of the age of enlightenment—both English and French—and references to it occur in literally every one of their publications. The publicist literature of the English revolution—Milton's poetry, Swift's pamphlets, excerpts from Harrington's *Oceana* and from the works of Paine, Godwin, Priestley, Price, Fielding, Rousseau, Voltaire and Montesquieu—was constantly being printed, especially in *Pig's Meat*. The majority of the verses and articles were anonymous, or were written under pseudonyms, since any one of them could have become the object of legal proceedings, which happened in fact on more than one occasion. As a result of one of Thelwall's more "daring" articles printed in No. 8 of Spence's *Politics for the People* the editor was taken to court. But Spence used such occurrences to popularise the struggle for freedom of the press still further.

The poetry and publicist literature of the Corresponding Societies reached its peak during the years when the revolutionary mood of the people was on the upsurge (1793-1795). The basic themes of this democratic literature were the wretched condition of the mass of the people and exposure of the ruling class; the revolution and the people militant; praise of the American and French revolutions; a vision of the future; the events of the democratic movement; and the image of the fighter for the people's rights.

The most frequent theme was exposure of the ruling classes and of the whole state machine of parliamentary monarchy from a republican standpoint. The poets wrote of the rightless condition of the popular masses in England at the end of the eighteenth century, especially of the urban proletariat. Here already we see the full variety of the genres of this literature: the solemn ode and the little satirical song to the tune of "Malbrook", the parody of the litany and the short catechism for democrats, the verse epistle characteristic of the eighteenth century, the satirical fable in the spirit of John Gay, the biting epigram and the topical impromptu. Satire is particularly characteristic of the verse of this cycle. Satirical portraits of the despotic monarchy, of the merciless landlord driving the peasant from the land, of the venal parliamentarian, judge or priest, constantly recur. One of the finest examples is the "New Vicar of Bray". The poet ridiculed political trimming and venality, and in a new up-to-date version of the old song created a biting satire on the clergy and, in general, on all the lackeys of English reaction. For money the new Vicar of Bray was ready even to make friends with foreign invaders; the very thought of English democrats filled him with dread:

When London corresponding Folks
Set up the Rights of Man,
My anger glow'd like red-hot cawks*
Against the desp'rate plan.
For help then trembling P——t apply'd
Lest hanged he should be,
And I stepped forth, and boldly cried,
Sirs, wha wants me ?†

* A Scots word signifying red-hot embers. (Note by the Editor of *Politics for the People*.)

† *Politics for the People*, Part II, No. 10.

While drawing a picture of the ruin of the people, the poetry of the Corresponding Societies was not confined to complaints about their hard lot and to anti-militarist declarations. High civic feeling led the poet to turn from exposure to revolutionary protest, to the image of the people militant.

There were two wings among the democrats, differing in their view of the way to transform society. The journals of Spence and Thelwall, although not always consistent, took up a revolutionary standpoint on the question of methods of struggle. The group around Francis Place and William Godwin advocated peaceful “petitioning” as against revolutionary agitation. Most of the popular poetry which has come down to us reflects the former point of view. In a number of poems written at the end of 1793 and the beginning of 1794 there appears a direct call to rebellion. Only the guillotine can cleanse the whole world of oppressors. A parody on the national anthem, performed at one of the theatrical shows organised by the Corresponding Societies, ended with a glorification of the guillotine.*

Long live great guillotine,
Who shaves the Head so clean
Of Queen or King :
Whose power is so great,
That ev'ry Tool of State
Dreadeth his mighty weight.
Wonderful Thing!!!

The guillotine is the symbol of the approaching vengeance of the people. No wonder the reactionary parodies of *The Anti-Jacobin* attempted at the end of the nineties to blacken this image of democratic poetry, representing it as incitement of the rabble to bloody debauchery. We must also include in the popular poetry of the Corresponding Societies the revolutionary song with the chorus “Come rouse to arms !” which was sent from the provinces to Thomas Hardy, secretary of the London Corresponding Society, and which was found among his papers at the time of his arrest. In an amended and abridged version this song is still attributed to Burns (“Why should we idly waste our prime . . .”).† Burns’s work in the nineties was closely linked to the democratic

* A broadsheet of 1793—“A Cure for National Grievances. Citizen Guillotine. A New Shaving Machine.”

† In the text of the song published in the complete works of Burns, two verses are omitted, the second and fourth, which expose the legalised robbery of the people in England, and in which the anonymous poet calls for the cleansing of the Augean stables of the English state:

The starving wretch who steals for bread
But seldom meets compassion,
And shall a crown preserve the head
Of him who robs a nation ?
Such partial laws we all despise ;
See Gallia’s bright example :
The glorious sight before our eyes,
We’ll on every tyrant trample.

Chorus: Come rouse to arms, etc.

Our Juries are a venal pack,
See Justice topsy-turvy ;
On Freedom’s cause they’ve turned a back,
Of Englishmen unworthy ;
The glorious work but once begun,
We’ll cleanse the Augean stables :
A moment lost, and we’re undone.
Come strike while we are able.

Chorus: Come rouse, etc.

upsurge in the country. Such political songs as "The Tree of Liberty" and "A man's a man for a' that" prove that Burns, in essence, shared the views of the Corresponding Societies and spoke out in passionate defence of democratic principles. It is no accident that it was precisely the radical-democratic press of the nineties that popularised his poetry, and that the popular verse of the beginning of the nineteenth century contained an extensive group of Scottish songs and verses, using Burns's rhythms, melodies and peculiarities of style down to direct borrowing of the poetic structure of Burns's poetry.

The song was the most "plebeian" genre of this type of poetry; it made possible a swift and instant response to all the events of the day.

Another constant theme of civic poetry was the glorification of the French and American revolutions, linked to the general theme of revolution and the people. If the themes of revolutionary retribution were distinguishing features of the poetry of the Corresponding Societies, then praise of the great French Revolution was characteristic of all English democratic literature. The Corresponding Societies undertook the defence of the basic principles of the French Jacobins and welcomed the Jacobin terror. The English democrats, however, had their own aims in the struggle, their own programme, reflecting the strength and weakness of the *English* democratic movement. All attempts at representing the English democrats as mere imitators of the French stem from the bourgeois historians' hoary but still practised endeavour to falsify the history of the democratic movement by explaining it away as a phenomenon not at all typical of England and due to foreign influence.

As an example of revolutionary poetry we may mention the "Patriotic Song" published in the democratic newspaper *Sheffield Register* by the young Corresponding Society poet James Montgomery. For publishing the poem, which exposes foreign intervention against revolutionary France, Montgomery was imprisoned. The court objected in particular to those words of the song which declared that the fate of European freedom depended on the victory of the French Revolution.

The democrats of the end of the eighteenth century conceived the future as a utopian realm of liberty. Typical of this point of view is Tom Paine's "Tree of Liberty", written during his participation in the American Revolution but popular in the Corresponding Societies and later in the nineteenth century. A more complete vision of the future freedom is expressed in the song "The Triumph of Liberty, or the Rights of Man", sung to the tune of "Hearts of Oak". The chorus sounds a note of firm confidence in the final victory of the people; the poet vows that he will go on fighting until oppression has been driven from the land.*

Revolutionary protest and songs of the future realm of freedom frequently appear in the poetry of the Corresponding Societies in a religious form. The true character of this religiosity, which had nothing in common with the official English Church, becomes clear when we consider the popular parodies on church litanies printed in Spence's papers. There is no doubt about the free-thinking, enlightened tendencies of the anti-clerical song-parodies. In contrast to parodies of the biblical style, we also find elements of a new style taking shape in the songs. Comic over-exaggeration of the biblical style produced a satirical style of its own which in the nineteenth century more than once attracted the democratic poet-satirist William Hone and many Chartist poets.

An important place in the poetry of the *Corresponding Societies* is occupied by songs which paint a picture of the fighting democrat and the events of the democratic movement. In them we find a reflection of the people's sympathy for the courageous fighter who, for the sake of the people's cause, suffered

* *Loose Meat for Pigs*—the poetical supplement to the *Pig's Meat*, published in the form of broadsheets which are the rarest editions of the popular press in England.

imprisonment, penal servitude and death. There was a particularly strong reaction to the legal proceedings against the leaders of the London Corresponding Society. The names of Thomas Hardy, John Horne Tooke, John Thelwall and the playwright Thomas Holcroft became symbols of the struggle for democratic ideals. The image of the democrat appears in relation to concrete events in the struggles of the Corresponding Societies. Side by side with this there are attempts to create a more generalised image of the fighter-democrat and the poet-democrat.

The poetry of the Corresponding Societies is a literary trend distinguished by common ideological and artistic peculiarities. Having adopted the ideals of Reason, Light and Liberty, it lends them a democratic character which is most consistent for the eighteenth century. Apart from this, it represents a point of transition in English literature from instructive realism to revolutionary romanticism. Its exposure of the existing political and social system can be classed as enlightened realism, while its comprehension of contemporary cataclysms and the prospects of their outcome is in the spirit of revolutionary romanticism. In this respect the poetry of the Corresponding Societies is close to the romantic work of William Blake, whose rebellious fantasy is interwoven with social exposure.

The basic genres of Corresponding Society poetry are the political appeal in song, the solemn ode or hymn, the political fable, the topical satire and the epigram. The publicist style of popular poetry also determined the form of the images: we get frequent personifications of social and political conceptions (Freedom, Oppression, Truth, Falsehood, Peace, Destruction, and so on). Typical of the songs is their mixture of the old and new, of traditional literary forms and the living language of the people. In the odes and epistles the style is close to the literary, rationalist language of classical poetry; in the songs and epigrams one often meets simple colloquial language close in spirit to folksong and satirical couplets. Folksong—its rhythm and form—had a very direct influence on the democratic poetry of the masses.

One of the major poets and publicists of the Corresponding Societies was the fiery orator John Thelwall (1764-1834). Thelwall began writing poetry during the 1780s, when his verse was strongly influenced by the style of the Gothic novels. This early poetry as yet lacked revolutionary feeling. In 1793 Thelwall joined the London Corresponding Society, and his poetry developed a militant political flavour. The best collection of his poems—*Political Songs* (1794)—is an outstanding example of the kind of poetry we are studying. They are full of original revolutionary feeling, though typical of the age of enlightenment; even here we find the contradiction between the call to decisive action and the assertion that the writer's pen is capable of transforming the world, which is a peculiarity of the whole ideology of the Corresponding Societies. Thelwall draws a picture of the appropriation of the country's wealth by the ruling circles, and turns to the oppressors with a grim warning:

But cease ye fleecing Senators
Your country to undo—
Or know we British San Culottes
Hereafter may fleece you,
For well we know if tamely thus
We yield our wool like drones
Ye will not only fleece our backs,
By God you'll pick our bones.*

Many of Thelwall's songs and verses were first published in his *Tribune*, which became the focal point of the literary struggle of the Corresponding Societies after the political trials of 1794.

* *Tribune*, No. 8, May 2, 1795.

Paine's *Rights of Man* and Godwin's *Political Justice* had a tremendous influence on Thelwall's outlook and on the whole ideology of the Corresponding Societies. Thelwall owed his understanding of how the character of man was determined by the world around him entirely to Godwin. From it Thelwall drew the revolutionary conclusion that it was necessary to change the social conditions of life, thus differing sharply from Godwin. While popularising *Political Justice* in his lectures, Thelwall at the same time pointed out its shortcomings, among which he numbered first and foremost its advocacy of passivity. Thelwall's political lectures, in which he proclaimed the necessity of universal suffrage and reform of Parliament, Godwin considered dangerous and incitement to open rebellion. It is not surprising then that after 1794 Godwin left the London Corresponding Society, because he saw in it a dangerous similarity to the French Jacobins. Even then, however, Thelwall continued to defend the more democratic ideas of *Political Justice* (for example, the critique of private property) from attempts by reactionaries to blacken this outstanding thinker.

The poet, publicist and publisher James Montgomery (1771-1854) took an active part in the social and political struggles in the provinces and became one of the leading members of the Sheffield Corresponding Society. In a hymn written for the Sheffield democrats, Montgomery called upon them to break their fetters and free themselves from the oppression of despotism. The paper which he edited, *Iris*, was in fact the organ of the Sheffield Corresponding Society. Montgomery was twice imprisoned because of the verse and articles printed in it. It was while in prison that he wrote his most significant poetry of the nineties—the verses which make up the collection *Prison Amusements*. In one of the finest poems of this collection, the satirical “Monologue of a Wagtail”, he ridiculed the haughty gentry who lived on the people's labour, and parodied the idealist philosophising of the aristocracy. In the satirical poems of the collection we can clearly discern the traditional social exposure of the literature of enlightenment, which in Montgomery is blended with elements of revolutionary romanticism in a series of his pantheistic poems, close in many respects to Shelley's cosmic lyrics. His dream of mankind's bright future is embodied in allegorical images of the forces of nature, “light” and “darkness”, “good” and “evil”.

The traditions of the political songs and satires of the Corresponding Societies were continued in the popular poetry of the beginning of the nineteenth century. Among the new generation of English democratic poets there were many veterans of the struggle for the rights of the people. Montgomery, whose most significant creative period was the first decade of the nineteenth century, depicted the national liberation struggle of the Swiss people against the Napoleonic invaders in his poem “The Wanderer of Switzerland” (1806). Anticipating the revolutionary romantics, Montgomery developed this theme in a militant democratic manner. His poem soon became an object of conflict between the two camps in English literature. The *Edinburgh Review* published a biting article comparing it with the crude farce of vulgar plays. Byron, who prized “The Wanderer of Switzerland” highly, spoke out in defence of the freedom-loving poetry of the “Bard of Sheffield”, contrasting Montgomery's poem with the mystic ballads of the Lake poets.*

Another important poem by Montgomery, “The West Indies” (1809), was devoted to exposure of the English colonial system. The new element which

* Byron's “English Bards and Scotch Reviewers” was not the only defence of democratic literature. A few years earlier Thelwall had published his “Reply to the Calumnies, Misrepresentations and Literary Forgeries contained in the anonymous observations on his Letter to the Editor of the *Edinburgh Review*” (1809), in which he protested angrily against the dominant position in literature held by the reactionary Edinburgh critics.

Montgomery introduced into English abolitionist literature was his portrayal of the slaves in revolt, driving a road to freedom and happiness through revolution. The heroic figure of the negro fighter, leading the coming revolt of all African peoples, occupied a central place in the poem and was close in spirit to the romantic hero of Byron's poems. Romantic images of the risen people and of the young rebel leader, however, exist side by side with lifeless allegories. The passionate publicist monologue is interwoven with a poetic didacticism drawn from the experience of the descriptive didactic poetry of the age of enlightenment.

The ideological side of the poem is no less contradictory. The poet believed that Africa would throw off the yoke of the European colonisers, and dreamed of a happy future for the people of Africa and the whole world. However, he regarded a flowering of science and art and a spreading of enlightenment the prerequisites for this.

The struggle over the poetry and publicist activities of the Corresponding Societies sharpened at the end of the 1790s in connection with the slanderous parodies of *The Anti-Jacobin*. The radical democratic paper *Black Dwarf* wrote in 1823 of how reaction had feared the establishment of a direct link between the Corresponding Societies and the people. Right up to the period of Chartism their poetry remained a real weapon in the hands of democrats and evoked the fury of reaction.

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Translated by M.M.

A New Sense of Direction

Robert Daglish

This article deals with new developments in Soviet cinema, which has just held its first festival reviewing the work of the past two years. All Soviet studios submitted the best of their new productions. The author, who lives and works in Moscow, has the advantage over readers in that he has been able to see all the films about which he writes. Some of them, however, have been shown at SCR film evenings, and it is hoped that others will be seen in coming months.

IT costs about two and a half million roubles to make an average-length film at a Soviet studio, and in spite of television the first week of general release usually pays the bill. The average attendance at Soviet cinemas in 1957 was calculated at 9,000,000 a day.

Soviet producers (one graduates as a producer, director, cameraman or actor at the State Institute of Cinematography) have a plan to fulfil and they get a bonus, which is shared out among the whole group, for making a film in advance of schedule. Technical staff work fixed hours at the studios, but when on location, which brings an automatic increase in pay, they will work almost any hours to help the director cope with difficult conditions, weather and so on. Unless the director is a bad organiser and tires everybody out with changes of plan, he can rely on a great deal of team spirit and encouragement from all the members of his group.

From the economic point of view Soviet film-makers have a lot in their favour. They also have audiences quite unspoiled by standardised glamour, that any Pullman cinema manager might regard with envy.

Yet until fairly recently the number of new Soviet films was remarkably small. During the "lean years" of Soviet cinema, as the early post-war period is now called, the slogan used to be "Fewer but better". With one or two notable exceptions, such as *Mussorgsky* (1951), it cannot be said to have worked. It was particularly difficult for the young producer. One might as well try to learn how to skate without falling as try to make films without failures. Unless a director can carry his experiment through to the point where an audience, not a ministerial committee, either likes or dislikes his film he cannot be satisfied with the result. Probably the art councils at the studios, which are elected from and by the film-makers themselves and now have a much larger say in judging a studio's work, have made this fact much more generally realised than it used to be. At the same time the ministry has adopted a broader attitude to films of a controversial nature and the result has been a steady flow of new films of varying quality with a number of successes which promise well for the future.

At the recent USSR film festival first prize was awarded to *And Quiet Flows the Don*, Sergei Gerasimov's film version of the Sholokhov novel. A detailed appreciation of this five-hour serial, of the faultless but slightly conventional camerawork, the skilfully condensed script, and the controversial acting, would take an article in itself. But perhaps the most important thing about the film is that it *is* Sholokhov. One may criticise Gerasimov's script for omitting certain parts of the novel (something had to be omitted anyway), but the essential Sholokhov—his objectivity, his ability to see humanity on both sides of the struggle—remains.

No Soviet writer is more respected than Sholokhov, and it was to be expected that a faithful interpretation of his work would be given on the screen. But it was not easy. While I was on location with the group last sum-

mer, Gerasimov told me a story that illustrates that “interfering bureaucrats” are not the only people a script-writer has to reckon with.

In one edition of the novel Sholokhov slightly changes the story of Podtyolkov’s massacre of his White guard prisoners: one of the officers sparks off the bloodshed by drawing a revolver at the critical moment. When Gerasimov wrote his script he did not include the revolver-pulling, since Sholokhov had also abandoned it in his latest editions, thus leaving the massacre unprovoked. When it came to filming the scene, however, Gerasimov found himself faced with a mass protest by local Cossacks, ex-Red Guards, some of whom had actually been eye-witnesses of the incident during the civil war. They were Gerasimov’s advisers on local lore and they flatly refused to allow such a “distortion of historical truth”. Their point was that the massacre *had* been provoked and it would be an insult to the memory of a national hero (Podtyolkov) not to show how it happened. The result is that in the final version of the film the revolver does flash for an instant, but so quickly that unless you are expecting it you would never notice.

One is tempted to see the influence of this triumph of the Sholokhov attitude to historical events in at least two recent outstanding films about the last war, *Soldiers* and *Three Came Out of the Forest*. The former, which is based on a story by Viktor Nekrasov, was awarded a third prize at the recent festival. It is a complete breakaway from films of the type of *The Fall of Berlin*. But it goes much farther than merely getting the role of the commander-in-chief in right perspective. It is the first Soviet war film I have seen where orders from a superior officer are questioned. A platoon commander is ordered to capture a hill which he knows cannot be captured. His commanding officer refuses to listen to argument and the platoon is almost completely wiped out in a senseless attack across a sea of mud, filmed in a manner that leaves one in no doubt about the horror of war. The commanding officer’s motives are subtly treated, but he has to suffer for his action, while the unit is re-formed, with a new commander, under whom it eventually captures the hill.

In *Three Came Out of the Forest* it is the effect of the war on people’s lives in peacetime that is under discussion. Three members of a partisan detachment, two men and a girl, leave their camp on an assignment just before it is attacked and destroyed. Ten years later evidence is discovered that one of the three was a traitor, who gave away the detachment’s whereabouts to the enemy. In the complicated story that follows there is a very clear and hopeful message of faith in friendship. One of the three, now a successful institute lecturer, gives incriminating evidence against his friend because on the surface it appears to be true. Only at the end of the film does he realise that it was his duty as a friend to look below the surface for the deeper human motive that contradicted his evidence.

The superb acting and brilliant camera-work which won *When the Cranes Fly* a gold medal at Cannes put this film in a class by itself. Summing up his opinion of the film for *Iskusstvo Kino*, the Italian director de Santis says that he thinks parts of it are in “contemporary cinema language” while others are “archaic”. As contemporary he offers the great “seeing-off” scene, where Veronika (Samoilova) tries vainly to find her young fiancé in the column of departing troops.

Kalatozov’s and Urusevsky’s ebullient use of the camera has been hailed as revolutionary by Soviet critics and public alike, but, like de Santis, not without reservations, particularly about some of the more flamboyant work. To my surprise I see that *Films and Filming*, in its review of the Cannes festival, singles out the air-raid seduction scene as the highlight of the picture. To me it seemed that this was just the point where the spell of original camera-work broke down and we were plunged into melodrama. Soviet critics seem to be

divided on the point, but if the objections a few years ago might have been of a puritanical nature the boot is on the other leg now. Some idea of the nicety of the discussion can be gained from M. Turovskaya's remarks in *Iskusstvo Kino*. She sees this scene as a fault of the script rather than of the cameraman.

"The film goes into too much detail to explain Veronika's fall from grace", she writes. "'Fall from grace'—one can't help using that old-fashioned term, because what happens to the heroine in the film is not demanded by circumstances, it is merely an unfortunate accident bolstered up with a great deal of romantic effects." In Rozov's play, on which the film is based, Veronika misses seeing Boris off at the end of the first act and at the beginning of the second act she is already married to Mark, his cousin, who is dodging army service. Comparing the film with the play, Turovskaya goes on: "In striving to guard their heroine against any suspicion of weakness, the makers of the film have presented an accident as a real cause, forgetting that the accident is stupid and not in the least dramatic. Whereas we did not excuse, but could understand, the Veronika of the play, we are prepared to excuse the Veronika of the film but we can't understand her."

The thing that links *When the Cranes Fly* with other recent war films is the attempt to portray what a Soviet critic calls the "unheroic heroes", the small people who were so often lost in the epic canvases of immediate post-war years, and who are now making a very welcome appearance just when the camera has acquired a new epic scope. What will the Soviet broad screen bring us? It is too early yet to judge the broad-screen version of Alexei Tolstoi's trilogy *Ordeal*, although the first part of the film, *Sisters*, directed by Roshal, won second prize at the festival. To me the screen in this film seemed to be full of period furniture, but this may have been due as much to weakness in the script as to faults of direction; certainly one could not help feeling sorry for Davidov as he struggled to make something of his overwritten part as Bessonov, the symbolist poet. But I am told there are better things to come.

To me the best of these studies of personal life against a background of war, or revolution, is *The House Where I Live*. With a faultlessly balanced script by Olshansky, who wrote *Three Came Out of the Forest*, it gives a wonderfully true and intimate picture of the life of an average Soviet family over a period of about fifteen years. Olshansky was awarded a first prize for his script to this film and the quality of his subsequent work makes one think of him as the most promising of the new generation of Soviet script-writers.

There is still a shortage of comedy on the Soviet screen. We have long been waiting for Alexandrov's much-talked-of international comedy *Pilgrims*, or, as it is now going to be called, *The Russian Souvenir*. And there is little else. But although it can scarcely be classed as comedy (it begins with the hero returning from serving a term in jail for assault and battery) there are moments in *It Happened in Penkovo* which are uproariously funny. Sergei Antonov's collective farm story on which the film is based has been translated into English and no brief summary of the plot could do justice to the excellent acting and sensitive direction that have made it such a good film. Its serious theme is treated with humour, and again it is so near to real life.

The Soviet film industry is now producing something like 100 films a year. Together with its fertility it seems to have discovered in the search for realism a new sense of direction that makes every visit to the cinema an adventure not to be missed.

Report from Antarctica

S. S. Vyalov

Antarctic exploration epitomises man's battle against the elements. Even though carefully equipped with the best that science and engineering can provide, the severe conditions tax the endurance of explorers to the extreme. In this article, Dr. S. S. Vyalov, a member of the Soviet wintering party which stayed at Mirny in 1957-8, gives a vivid picture of what is involved in one of the less spectacular but important investigations being made in the International Geophysical Year studies of Antarctica.

A TWIN-ENGINED LI-2 circles over Mirny and sets a course westward. The huts of the camp become barely perceptible dots and then disappear completely from view.

We are flying along the coast. Its line is clearly defined by a barrier, a sheer precipice of ice, rising sixty to 120 feet above the sea. To the right we see the black waters of the Davis Sea with the white spots of floating icebergs; to the left a monotonous waste of snow merging in the distance with the horizon. There are four glaciologists in the plane. We are heading for Mt Braun, some 200 kilometres from Mirny. The object of our flight is to organise observation of the movement of the ice-mass.

Locked in icy armour, Antarctica is often called dead, frozen. But this is by no means so. The ice-mass of the continent has its own life, and during the thousands of years of its existence the ice goes through a long process of complicated transformations. Water evaporating from the surface of the seas surrounding the continent falls on to its icy surface in the form of snow. Packing down under the pressure of new-fallen layers, the snow gradually changes into *névé*—the intermediate stage between snow and ice (snow whose open pores have already started to become isolated bubbles of air)—and then into ice. The ice is, however, viscous and plastic, and under pressure of its own weight gradually spreads in all directions, like dough on a table. A house built on a glacier may find itself in the sea within a year. Incidentally, this is what happened to the American base: three times it had to be shifted to a new spot farther away from the coast. Mirny, on the other hand, is built on a site which has outcrops of rock. Although the saddle between them is filled with continental ice, the ice lodges in the rocks and remains stationary.

For thousands of years the ice-mass has been flowing from the centre of the continent to the edges, slipping into the sea and forming icebergs. These huge fragments of glacier thaw in the sea, adding to its waters. Thus the circle is completed from century to century: water—vapour—snow—ice, and then water again. The movement of the ice-mass is quite insignificant in the central areas of Antarctica, but as it approaches the edge it accelerates more and more. In the coastal zone the speed becomes so great that the ice not only spreads like dough, but whole blocks of it slide along the underlying bed. Through this rapid slipping along an uneven bed, deep fissures form in the ice, presenting great danger to polar explorers.

From the aeroplane these fissures are quite plain to us; they begin quite close to the camp and cover the whole coast like a net. The fissures stretch along the coast, indicating the line of movement of the glacial mass, to which they are at right angles.

It is very important to study this movement. In what directions, at what speed, do the masses of Antarctic ice move? How long does it take the ice to reach the coast? How much flows into the sea each year, swelling the armada of floating ice-mountains? All these problems occupy glaciologists.

To answer them, lengthy observation of the movement of the ice has to

be carried out. For this purpose a series of marks are set up on the surface of a glacier and their position is determined by theodolite. A few months later the survey is repeated, and the speed and line of movement of the ice-crust are calculated by the movement of the marks. By measuring the change the movement has caused in the inclination of holes bored in the ice, we determine the difference between the movement of the deep layers and the surface of the ice.

A geodetic survey has to be carried out from stationary points. In the conditions of Antarctica, where the whole ice-crust is moving, outcrops of native rock, the infrequent hills and mounds which cut through the glacial mass, serve as such points. Such observations have already been organised on the coast, but it is particularly interesting to study the glacial movement in the heart of the continent, where the outcrops of rock (I am speaking of the eastern part of Antarctica) are literally to be counted on one's fingers. Mt Braun is one of the few such points in the area where the Soviet expedition is working. So the hopes placed on glaciological work in this area are understandable.

Our route lies past Mt Gauss, situated right on the sea coast, discovered by the German Drygalski expedition, which stayed in this region in 1901-1903, on the ship *Gauss*. This expedition measured the glacier's speed of movement in the vicinity of the mountain and ascertained that it was from seven to twenty-eight feet a month. It will be interesting to discover whether it has altered at all during the past fifty-five years. It was with this object in view that Soviet geodesists carried out their first survey here.

Working conditions were difficult. The ice-streams flowing round the mountain were completely criss-crossed with crevasses ranging from scarcely visible cracks to fissures thirty to 100 feet deep and wide enough for a lorry to fall into. A careless step and one would plummet into the icy abyss. Roped to one another for safety, L. I. Fedosyev, S. A. Yevteyev and B. I. Barkhatov worked for several days in these dangerous spots. The results of their measurements are being studied.

From Mt Gauss the plane turns sharply southwards into the heart of the continent. Soon the dark strip of sea has disappeared from view, and all that **meets one's gaze** is the monotonous dazzling white plain. It is very difficult to steer a course over this snowy waste. There is not a single landmark on the "ground", nothing anywhere to catch the eye, not even shadows. Soon, however, the eye becomes accustomed to it, and you begin to discern small hillocks and depressions.

A dark spot appears, just like a blot on a huge sheet of paper. It grows steadily, and at last below us is Mt Braun, a longish mound of stone rising solitary from the mass of ice and snow.

The plane circles several times, choosing a spot to land. The pilot throws out smoke cartridges to determine the force and direction of the wind. The smoke settles low. Down below a violent ground snowstorm is raging—it hardly ever ceases here for a single day—constantly whipping up the snow and forming drifts. These drifts are inevitable ingredients in any Antarctic landscape. They dot the entire surface of the snow cover, stretching in ridges along the direction of the wind. They are particularly dangerous in aircraft landings, as the skis may dig into them.

The ground storm has hidden the drifts from view. This makes a landing more difficult; but Moskalenko, the pilot, brings the plane to a perfect landing at the foot of the mountain. We bring out our equipment and start assembling the tent. With the strong wind tearing the canvas from our hands, this is something of a difficulty. We stretch the double cover with its round inset widows over the frame of light bent-aluminium tubes, lashing it securely

to the waterproof groundsheet. The windproof, hermetically closed travelling home looks something like a Central Asian *yurt*. The design has been specially worked out for polar conditions. The dome-shaped tent is painted black, so that it will absorb more heat and stand out sharply against the white background so as to be visible from a distance.

We say goodbye to the airmen, and a few minutes later the plane takes off and we are left alone. Around us there is nothing but the endless waste of snow and the cutting Antarctic wind. One cannot help a feeling of loneliness, of being abandoned. However, fur skins have been laid in the tent, the gas burner is lit, and the kettle is singing. And straight away it is more comfortable and cheerful.

After a rest, we set out for the mountain. Though not big, it is rather difficult to climb. Our feet slip on the steep icy slopes. We are glad of our spiked climbing boots and ice-axes.

After choosing a site for our observations, we return to the tent for markers. The other three set out to put them in place, while I remain behind to cook supper. I work assiduously, ambitious to shine with culinary talent. My labours are appreciated as they deserve, particularly when the tin-opener is found baked with the macaroni!

Our fur sleeping-bags padded with down give us fine protection from the cold. Incidentally, it was now mid-February, still summer (Antarctic summer), and the thermometer reads only -10° to -15° Centigrade.

We are awakened by the fierce howling and whistling of the wind. A blizzard has blown up—our first Antarctic blizzard. Later on in our long wintering period we experienced many even fiercer snow-storms, but all the same we shall never forget our first meeting with the mistress of the Antarctic spaces. Besides, we were not in the solidly built houses at Mirny, but in a canvas tent, lost amid the endless snows.

The wind grows stronger, a continuous vortex in the air. Everything is hidden by the swirling white mist. The outline of the mountain has completely disappeared in it. It is impossible to distinguish a human figure even a few paces away. If you leave the tent, the biting wind lashes your face, snow-dust blinds your eyes and lodges in the folds of your clothes. After five minutes in the open even your pockets are packed with snow.

It is chilly in the tent. We sit about in our warm Antarctic suits and thigh-length fur boots, swapping stories of previous encounters with bad weather.

The blizzard grows fiercer. The howling and whistling of the furious wind do not die down for a single moment. Our tent, so tiny and defenceless amid the raging Antarctic elements, shudders and shakes in the fierce gusts. It seems as if the wind will lift it up at any moment and roll it away like a football over the snowfield.

Spontaneously the conversation takes a clear-cut direction: what are our prospects if the tent is blown away? Since these are none too pleasant, we decide not to wait but to take the simplest of preventive measures. We lash the tent down with ropes; and in lieu of stakes, we drive ice-axes, spades and anything else that comes to hand into the snow. Then, realising that we have done everything we can, we crawl into our sleeping-bags.

After forty-eight hours the blizzard begins to abate. Though the wind is still strong, we can wait no longer. The work has to be finished before the aircraft returns. Once more we climb the mountain, but it is impossible to survey from there. The wind blows the instruments down, and the fine snow-dust is blinding. Fedosyev and Kuznetsov decide to go down again. Geologist Barkhatov and I go on clambering over the rocks, hacking out steps in the ice.

The descent comes out on to a picturesque ice ravine. On one side there is a chaos of rocks, on the other a sheer wall of snow with an overhanging peak.

This is the windward side of the mountain. Here the wind has hollowed out a huge crater, with smooth, transparent blue ice like a frozen mountain lake at the bottom.

We take samples of the ice and move over to the other side of the mountain. It is completely covered with snow, forming a long spur at the foot. A glacier doubles round the mountain, an icy stream flowing within banks of ice. It has its own floods, rapids, and even a waterfall, or rather an ice fall. The ice flows much faster here, as may be seen from the network of fissures criss-crossing the surface of the stream.

We return "home" late at night. Tomorrow is the last day of our work here. We shall be in Mirny within twenty-four hours.

Beyond the walls of the tent the Antarctic night closes in, the last rays of the sun have stained the snow crimson. A round moon hangs in the sky, shedding its cold light over the waste of snow, which sparkles with myriad blue sparks. It is silent, dead. You seem to be on a different planet, where everything is sleeping the sleep of eternity.

But there is a beauty of its own in this Antarctic landscape, the limitless expanses of ice amid the majestic silence. Antarctica still seems to be in the Ice Age, which was long since left behind by the other continents. It is called the land of secrets, securely kept by the winds, frost, the lifeless expanses of ice. It is grand to realise that the time is coming when its secrets will be revealed.

From *Znanie-Sila*, 2, 1958.

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AS Moscow Letter

More About Music

Ralph Parker

MUSIC was one of the arts dealt with in a Central Committee decree during the post-war ideological campaign associated with the name of Andrei Zhdanov. Since February 1948, however, when the decision on Muradeli's opera *The Great Friendship* was taken, until quite recently, little more was heard of the Party's attitude to music. There were, of course, statements from time to time, in connection with individual operas or sessions of the Composers' Union, where the principles of "realism" and "kinship with the people" were emphasised, and not long ago the former editors of *Sovietskaya Musika* came in for some authoritative criticism for daring to revise the orthodox periodisation of the history of Russian and Soviet music in a way that tended to reassess the "modernistic" trends in twentieth-century music. "They endeavoured", it was said, "to slur over the fundamental difference between our socialist art with its new, deeply progressive, ideological and artistic qualities and the art of the old, bourgeois world".

But at the end of May this year the Central Committee issued a brief statement,* supported by a long article in *Pravda*, that is being placed on the same level as the original 1948 decision that it rectifies. This statement, it is true, is by no means a revocation of the Zhdanov ukase. In fact, it elevates it to the level of a document for which the Central Committee took responsibility, making no mention of Zhdanov's name, and stating that "on the whole" it had played a positive role.

And yet the latest decision on music has been welcomed in musical circles—and far beyond—as a helpful encouragement to experimentation and a severe rebuke to a certain category of critics. It has been recognised as a condemnation of methods employed in the administration of musical life at the expense of originality, and as a serious attempt to remove the most serious obstacle to composing modern opera.

On the face of it, the decision does not seem to say much. After asserting that the development of Soviet music since 1948 had confirmed the correctness and timeliness of the Party instructions, it concedes that the appraisal of the work of some composers had been "unfounded and unjust" and that such gifted composers as Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturyan, Shebalin, Popov, Myaskovsky and others were far too sweepingly described as exponents of an "anti-popular formalistic trend in art". Stalin's subjective attitude to art had been partly responsible for the "unfair and unjustifiably sharp assessments of the work of several talented Soviet composers".

The long *Pravda* editorial devoted to the subject goes into much more detail. It begins by placing the 1946-8 decisions on questions of literature and art in their historical setting. They were taken, *Pravda* said, when the "cold war" had already started and when socialist ideology was under heavy attack. The Communist Party made it its task to raise the standard of all ideological work and to combat tendencies to remove art from the field of politics. This led it to condemn those composers who, for one reason and another, neglected

* See p. 30 of this issue.

in the early post-war years the “great and stirring themes of our times”—the spirit of victory, in short.

In these and similar passages in the *Pravda* editorial we are provided with a revealing glimpse of the problems that faced Russia's leaders in the sphere of the national morale during the difficult days of post-war reconstruction, when it seemed to them necessary to “rear the Soviet youth as cheerful and exuberant people devoted to the country, having faith in the victory of our cause, undaunted by obstacles and able to overcome any difficulties”.

It is, however, in the later passages of the *Pravda* editorial that Soviet intellectuals find the message for their work in the less tense situation of today. Taking its note from the Central Committee, *Pravda* describes the general evaluation of Soviet music made in 1948 as “unjustifiably harsh” to many works written prior to that date, including Dzerzhinsky's opera *And Quiet Flows the Don* and Khrennikov's *In the Storm*, Shostakovich's Fifth and Seventh Symphonies, Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet* and his *Alexander Nevsky* cantata, Myaskovsky's Sixteenth and Twenty-first Symphonies, and Khachaturyan's violin concerto and *Gayaneh* ballet. The sweeping manner in which the composers of these works were condemned was nothing less than a deviation from the line on cultural questions that Lenin himself had laid down. “Lenin taught us to be solicitous and attentive to masters of creative art. Suffice it to recall his remarkable letter to the *Pravda* editorial board over the one-sided criticism of Demian Bedny: ‘As for Bedny, I continue to *stick up for him*. Don't pick on human foibles, my friends. A talent is a rare thing. It has to be regularly and tactfully supported. It will be a sin, a great sin, upon your hearts . . . if you don't win over a talented contributor, if you *don't help him*.’”

The “peremptory condemnation” of operas such as Dankevich's *Bogdan Khmel'nitsky* and Zhukovsky's *From the Bottom of the Heart* were flagrant contradictions of this Leninist line, *Pravda* wrote. “It is clear that such appraisals could in no way inspire composers to the great and complex work of creating an opera on a modern Soviet theme.” In that sentence we find a clue to the problem that has puzzled many observers: why, at this stage, was this Central Committee decision necessary?

The Party leadership has lately been studying the question of the subject matter of the arts, especially ballet, cinema and opera. From its point of view the situation cannot be considered satisfactory. The last two new operas produced at the Bolshoi Theatre dealt with the Decembrist rising of the early nineteenth century and the 1905 period. The most ambitious film productions of the past eighteen months have been painstaking reconstructions of Russian life forty years ago. The setting of Khachaturyan's latest ballet at the Bolshoi is ancient Rome.

Various measures have been taken to encourage composers and choreographers to write ballets on modern Soviet themes, some pointed advice has been given to the film industry, and now we have the decision on music being mainly intended to encourage modern opera.

But how are composers to be encouraged? The *Pravda* editorial is firm about this. “The chief method of the Party in educating the artistic intelligentsia has been and remains the method of convincing, of explaining to it the major tasks of communist construction. . . . The Communist Party teaches us that in questions of literature and art it is necessary to be high-principled, considerate and attentive to artists, helpful in supporting their creative initiative.”

Today the Party's influence is being used to convince composers of opera to be bolder in their portrayal of the contemporary scene. “The new content of life imperatively demands new operatic forms and a new tonal and melodious speech.”

In their reactions to the Party's decisions leading Soviet composers have generally welcomed the rebuke that it administered to hasty, subjective criticism, and the encouragement it offers to the experimenter. Khrennikov, the first secretary of the USSR Composers' Union, thinks that the statement shows that the Party has "deep confidence" in the intelligentsia. Shostakovich wrote that he was "deeply moved" by the decision. (See page 5.) Khachaturyan called on the critics and the press to write more about Soviet music and to criticize it seriously. Kabalevsky considers that the decision will result in broader performance of Soviet music. The Minister of Culture, Mikhailov, spoke at a meeting of the necessity of a more attentive attitude towards artists and outlined measures being taken to encourage the writing and performance of Soviet opera.

Music Notes

THE OISTRAKH TRIO

SINCE Mr David Oistrakh was introduced to the London concert platform in November 1954 by the SCR, his authoritative playing has become widely familiar both from personal appearances and from recordings. To those who have heard recordings of the Oistrakh Trio—a long-standing association of three famous performers, Oistrakh, Oborin and Knushevitsky—a chance to hear them in person was an eagerly awaited event. They made their first appearance in London at an orchestral concert in the Festival Hall on May 8, 1958, with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent.

It was a happy choice to play Beethoven's Triple Concerto, since this is a work which calls less for the display of soloists' virtuosity than for the musicianly qualities of restraint and teamwork. The players proved themselves a masterly team, and the main impression left by their performance was of their interpretation of this unusual composition of Beethoven as an intimate personal work of rare beauty. To the known pleasure of Mr Oistrakh's fine tone, sure intonation and deep interpretative powers was added the new experience of hearing these qualities matched by like virtues in his colleagues. Mr Oborin's skill in scaling down his playing to the intimate proportions of the work without effacing himself marked him as a great musician. Mr Knushevitsky was able to display his mastery of the cello both in the profound lyrical beauty of the slow movement and in matching Mr Oistrakh in dialogue and in the exacting double runs for cello and violin. It was a memorable performance.

The other main item in the programme was a performance of Shostakovich's Eleventh Symphony, and a re-hearing of this monumental work in Sir Malcolm Sargent's interpretation confirmed the impression that the composer's powers con-

tinue at the full height attained in the Tenth Symphony and the Violin Concerto. It is the massive music of a genius.

D.T.R.

LEV OBORIN'S RECITAL

"TEMPO in music", said Toscanini, "is the all-important subject."

This viewpoint is evidently shared by Mr Lev Oborin, one of Russia's foremost teachers, who in his pianoforte recital at the Festival Hall combined a brilliant technique with a passionate concern for the rhythmic surge of the music. This gave many of his interpretations an extraordinary life and vitality.

It was most interesting to compare his approach with that of Claudio Arrau, who earlier in the week had given a recital devoted to Beethoven, Schubert and Liszt. Mr Arrau, in his search for perfection of detail and the loving shaping of a phrase, was occasionally led into overall rhythmic distortions which earned him rebukes from the critics the following morning. It could perhaps be said of Mr Oborin that in *his* search for the underlying pulse he occasionally threw away a telling phrase by not allowing the music sufficient time to breathe.

Nevertheless this was a most rewarding recital. Mr Oborin was particularly successful in Bach's Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D minor, which compelled attention from the first note to the last; in three preludes by Rachmaninov played with the greatest insight and obvious affection; and in the Mussorgsky *Pictures from an Exhibition*.

Here his tone colour was most subtly varied to obtain such different effects as the robust vulgarity of the market scene, the light humour of the *Ballet of the Chickens* and the capriciousness of *Children at Play*. Particularly outstanding was *The Catacombs*, which was most beautifully managed.

Only in the *Old Castle*, as later in the

Chopin Nocturne in F minor, did his brilliant finger-work fail to subdue itself to get the necessary caressing quality.

The audience made up for its lack of size by the warmth of its welcome, and extracted three encores, the last of which, the arduous Chopin Polonaise in A flat,

was tossed off by Mr Oborin with effortless ease, as if it had been the first instead of the final item in a programme which, in addition to the works already mentioned, included the *Les Adieux* Sonata of Beethoven and the Prokofiev Toccata, op. 11. R.F.C.

Documents

On Rectifying the Mistakes in the Appraisal of the Operas The Great Friendship, Bogdan Khmel'nitsky and From the Bottom of the Heart Decision of the CC of the CPSU, May 28, 1958

THE Central Committee of the CPSU notes that the CC resolution of February 10, 1948, on V. Muradeli's opera *The Great Friendship* did on the whole play a positive role in the development of Soviet musical art. This decision defined the tasks of developing musical art on the basis of the principles of socialist realism, and stressed the importance of the ties between art and the life of the Soviet people and the finest democratic traditions of classical music and of folk art. It justly condemned formalist tendencies in music, the would-be "innovations" which lead art away from the people and make it the province of a narrow circle of aestheticist epicures. The development of Soviet music in the years since then has confirmed the correctness and good timing of these party instructions.

At the same time, the appraisal of the work of individual composers given in that resolution was in several cases unfounded and unjust. V. Muradeli's opera *The Great Friendship* had shortcomings which deserved proper criticism; they did not, however, give grounds for declaring the opera an example of formalism in music. The gifted composers D. Shostakovich, S. Prokofiev, A. Khachaturyan, V. Shebalin, G. Popov, N. Myaskovsky and others, some of whose works showed incorrect tendencies, were without grounds described as exponents of an anti-popular formalistic trend.

In criticising Muradeli's opera, the resolution artificially counterposed some of the peoples of the North Caucasus to others, contrary to historic facts.

Some of the incorrect appraisals in the above resolutions reflected Stalin's subjective approach to individual works of art and creative endeavour.

Stalin's subjective approach to the appraisal of individual works of art was also manifested in the one-sided and tendentious criticism of K. Dankevich's opera *Bogdan Khmel'nitsky* and G. Zhukovsky's opera *From the Bottom of the Heart* in editorial articles published by *Pravda* on his instructions in 1951. Of course, a very negative influence was exerted on Stalin by Molotov, Malenkov and Beria in deciding these questions. Though the libretto

and music of the opera *Bogdan Khmel'nitsky* had shortcomings, there was no justification for the assertion that there were "gross ideological flaws" in the libretto, which was written by the distinguished Soviet authors W. Wassilewska and A. Korneichuk, and for accusing the composer, K. Dankevich, of lack of principle. The unfair charges contained in this article were subsequently echoed in various other articles and speeches.

The editorial article on the opera *From the Bottom of the Heart*, though it did make correct criticisms of the music and libretto of the opera, also contained obvious exaggerations and was one-sided.

The CC of the CPSU hereby resolves:

1. To record that the Central Committee resolution of February 10, 1948, on V. Muradeli's opera *The Great Friendship*, while correctly determining the direction for the development of Soviet art along the path of closeness to the people and realism, and justly criticising mistaken and formalistic tendencies in music, at the same time indulged in some unfair and unjustifiably sharp assessments of the work of a number of talented Soviet composers. This was a manifestation of the negative features characteristic of the period of the personality cult.
2. To recognise as wrong and one-sided the evaluations given in the *Pravda* articles on the operas *Bogdan Khmel'nitsky* and *From the Bottom of the Heart*. To instruct the editorial board of *Pravda* (Comrade Satyukov) to prepare an editorial article on the basis of this decision, giving a comprehensive and profound analysis of the fundamental problems of the development of Soviet musical art.
3. To propose that the Regional and Territorial Party Committees, the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of Union republics, and the USSR Ministry of Culture, shall carry out the necessary explanatory work on this decision in the creative unions and art institutions, with a view to raising the ideological and artistic standards of Soviet musical art and to rallying the creative intelligentsia further on the basis of communist ideology and strengthening the ties between art and the life of the people.

From *Pravda*, 8.6.58.

Book Reviews

DOSTOEVSKY THE MORALIST

Fyodor Dostoevsky, 1821-1881. V. Yermilov. (Moscow, 1958. FLPH. unpriced.) 294 pp. Numerous plates.

The Brothers Karamazov. F. Dostoevsky. Tr. with intr. by D. Magarshack. 2 vols. 382 + 913 pp. (Penguin Books, 6/- vol.)

The Brothers Karamazov. F. Dostoevsky. Tr. C. Garnett. 699 pp. n.e. (Four Square Books, 5/-.)

THE first of these is a translation of a book published in Russian on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of Dostoevsky's death. The year 1956 saw the resumption of the spate of articles and books on the great novelist's work which had continued all during the twenties and the thirties but had slackened noticeably since the end of the war. The occasion was also marked by the inception of a new complete edition of the novels in ten volumes. Up to the present, eight volumes have appeared. The complete edition on the one hand and Yermilov's book on the other represent the two main trends of scholarly work on Dostoevsky in the USSR, namely textual criticism and ethical analysis and assessment: formal studies get little attention. Such a distribution of emphasis is to be expected in the case of a novelist who was himself preoccupied with moral problems. It is to be expected, for that matter, of the Russian novel as a whole, seeing that the Russian novelists, as distinct from their French contemporaries, from the purely descriptive realists, were all so deeply involved in the great debates on human nature and the human predicament which have always commanded and doubtless always will command the attention of philosophers and teachers. Therein lies the distinguishing feature of the Russian novel as such. To demand monographs on Dostoevsky's epithets and metaphors, in place of moral and psychological studies, as does the author of a survey of Dostoevsky scholarship published recently in America, is to ask for dry bones instead of living flesh.* Such studies would at best provide materials for academic exercises: true criticism must go far beyond them.

How difficult it is to see Dostoevsky in

* "Throughout the Soviet period investigations of Dostoevsky's style—plot, genre (*sic*), devices, vocabulary, syntax, epithets, metaphors and so on—have been neglected in favour of biographical research, ideological analyses, and the editing and publication of the letters and manuscripts." (V. Seduro, *Dostoevsky in Russian Literary Criticism*, Columbia U.P., 1957, p.95.) Seduro's book contains a mass of bibliographical material. It is a pity that his commentary should have been spoilt by bad temper.

a true perspective! He was himself so aware of the stresses and the strains, the conflicts and contradictions of his own times, they reflected themselves so sharply in his conscience, that it is difficult to situate him objectively in relation to them. His reactions were far from simple. Supremely conscious of a cruel social system which was rapidly coming into being in Russia as capitalism installed itself there, loathing and despising it, he fell back, in search of stable positions from which to face it, on traditionalist habits of thought. At the same time he had to face, within himself, something which might well be looked upon by the social historian as an exasperated form of the very individualism which he condemned: unruly urges, anarchic impulses, an idealistic and rationalistic radicalism, which he could express with compelling lucidity and eloquence, but which he foisted upon his chosen enemies, the Socialists and other revolutionaries, in order to free himself from it and not take the responsibility for it. Ivan Karamazov's revolt against cruelty and injustice comes from the deepest layer of Dostoevsky's personality, a mental zone in which Voltaire, the author of *Candide*, was felt to be an ally, not an enemy; but he refused to recognise Ivan Karamazov's denial of a beneficent providence, in this far from best of all possible worlds, as an expression of his own philosophy of life. He preferred to range himself on the side of order, the established order. He rejected his own radicalism. He rejected the doctrine that human reason alone (or enlightened self-interest) can establish a just and charitable social order. And one can understand his having done so. One can also understand a socialist's refusal to have such a doctrine foisted off on him as a socialist doctrine. What is difficult to understand is that Dostoevsky should ever have tried to foist it off on people who, as he very well knew, were sacrificing their whole lives in a cause which patently transcended their own self-interest and which manifestly demanded disinterested love of their fellow men.

The biographer of Dostoevsky must face the issues presented by his ambivalence of attitudes, and Yermilov does face them: he concerns himself with them particularly. As for literary values, he is inclined to take them for granted. Dostoevsky is, in his opinion, one of the greatest writers of all time; that being so, he does not tell us that *The Brothers Karamazov* palpitates with precipitous

life; he does not tell us why *The Idiot* is somewhat slow for real enjoyment—he may well not accept that it *is* slow!—he does not reveal the secrets of Dostoevsky's creative imagination. His gaze is fixed on Dostoevsky the moralist, and it is obvious that he has found himself, both as a Russian and as a communist, at one and the same time subjugated and repelled. His method may be a somewhat blunt instrument for literary analysis, but there is no doubt about its power of penetration, with the plain, straightforward drive of his intellect behind it. His firm grasp of the movements of opinion in nineteenth-century Russia enables him to see in just what direction every satirical thrust carried. For all his reactionary attitudes, Dostoevsky nevertheless made a devastating attack on "a society rooted in violence and . . . ruled by the Luzhins, with their malice, crassitude and selfishness." "What remains in our hearts [adds the author], after reading *Crime and Punishment*, is not an idealisation of suffering, not a loss of hope, but an ineradicable hatred of the whole world of exploitation" (p.191). There is much to be gained, in the literary field, by the use of sociological methods when they are used as they are used here, with sufficient sensibility.

* * *

The interest of Mr. Magarshack's new translation of *The Brothers Karamazov* lies in just those subtle literary minutiae which the broad sweep of Mr. Yermilov's brush cannot hope to delineate; the translation of a literary masterpiece is an art of detail. With all due respect to Constance Garnett, who laboured so devotedly in the service of the Russian classical writers, it is only equitable to say that Mr. Magarshack has found, not once but a thousand times, the turn of phrase which makes for more pleasurable reading.

Here are a few examples from the famous scene in the garden on the night of the crime. G. "this personal revulsion was growing unendurable." M. "his physical aversion was becoming unbearable." G. ". . . slept like the dead beside her husband." M. "slept like a log beside her husband." G. "he only intended to look out from the steps." M. "he only intended to have a look round from the top of the steps." G. "he hurried to intercept the running figure." M. "he rushed frantically to intercept the running man." G. "Grigory cried out, beside himself, pounced on him and clutched his leg in his two hands." M. "Grigory, beside himself, uttered a loud cry, rushed at the man and clutched at his leg with both hands."

The cumulative effect of these slight changes tells strongly in the long run. It does not, of course, influence one's basic appreciation of the novel itself. The old magic works again. The imagination sur-

renders again to the evocation of panting, sweating, excessive life. The high degree of moral consciousness with which the author has endowed even the most passionate of his characters (*Video meliora proboque, Deteriora sequor*) again works the charm and maintains interest at the highest peak. The reflective part of one's mind is again offended by the arbitrary distribution of good and evil actions among the characters. But the change of style tells none the less; the simpler modern language removes the slight stylistic disguise and helps the reader to a more authentic experience of the original.* The policy of Mr. Rieu's *Penguin Classics* is justified once again.

J. S. SPINK.

* Only occasionally is it overdone and a disturbing note struck: "liquidate" (kill); "sovereign" (the coin, in Russia); "old man" (in the saloon-bar sense).

NOT A SIMPLE HERO

A *Hero of Our Time*. Lermontov. Tr. Vladimir and Dmitri Nabokov. (Doubleday, 8/6.)

IT is perhaps a sign of over-optimism in a non-Russian to claim a complete understanding of just what is going on in Lermontov's novel: ". . . pictures", as the author says of his own descriptions of the Caucasus, "that do not represent anything, especially for those who have not been there themselves." The events are simple enough, but Pechorin, the hero, is not. The question as to what sort of hero he is is poised on the razor's edge of Lermontov's own (on how many levels ironic?) "I wonder". His behaviour is, to say the least, as the perplexed old princess says to him, "somewhat ambiguous" (*somnitel'no*). A superficial judgment makes him a heartless scoundrel, but the very fact of his author's satirical intent turns him into a tragic hero, at the mercy of a force too powerful for him, the state of society itself. He is "all the vices of our generation in the fullness of their development," but, tragically, he is aware of his predicament.

This translation brings him as near to an English (or American) reader as will ever be possible. It is consistently and scrupulously exact, and captures every style demanded by the original: the awkward grace is there, and the poetry, and even the derivative insipidity where necessary, just as they are in the Russian. Unfortunately, Vladimir and Dmitri Nabokov insist on quarrelling rather noisily with almost all other previous translators and commentators, and this strikes a jarring note. They must be assured that they do not stand in any need of the testy aggressiveness with which they usher in their version as being "the first English translation of Lermontov's novel"; compared with them, other English translators have been fluently incorrect.

The foreword is stimulating (if only to anger), the notes on the text are very

helpful, and there is a useful map. The cover design is from a painting by Lermontov.

W. S. BAILEY.

UKRAINIAN CLASSIC

Boa Constrictor. Ivan Franko. Tr. Fainna Solasko. (FLPH, unpriced.)

THE five stories in this volume are all set in a little Galician township inhabited by Ukrainians and Jews. Shale oil has been discovered in the district and this has led to wild speculation, expropriation and swindling. Families are broken up, Ukrainian peasants lose their land and are forced to work for a pittance in stifling, murderous mines. People are brutalised and live in dire want and squalor. Crime is rampant. The only relaxation is vodka, body and soul destroying. There is no remedy, no escape, except in sunlit dreams of open skies, wooded hills and the rustle of ripening corn in the fields.

The stories are dramatic, the writer's vision is vigorous and gaunt. His heart is, of course, with the dispossessed, but he suggests no way out. The villains are Jews: foremen, innkeepers and mine-owners—hideous, subhuman fiends of boundless greed and no scruples. Character drawing is sharp but shallow, rather like the drawings accompanying the text. A more three-dimensional picture is, however, traced in the last, main story of the collection—"The Boa Constrictor". Franko here follows the development of a destitute Jewish boy, tortured by hunger, whose family and neighbours are wiped out by cholera. He is saved by a rag-merchant and joins him and the Jewish community.

"Here Herman first found out what sort of people Christians were, and his childish mind was quick to note that every person of Jewish faith had, so to speak, two faces: the one that was turned towards the muzhiks was always the same—squeamish, sarcastic, threatening, or crafty; the one that was turned towards people of his own faith was exactly the same as all ordinary faces—that is, each had its own peculiarities: kind or bitter, crafty or sincere, angry or gentle. Itsik's 'real' face was truly kind and sincere, opening up a whole new bright side of human nature for little Herman, who had never known the meaning of kindness, concern or care."

After Itsik dies, Herman's longing for security gradually turns to lust for power and greed, unstilled even by acquisition of great wealth. Only domestic tragedy

and a business crisis bring him a glimmer of sympathy for the poor and impel him to one furtive act of kindness. He is himself victim of the boa-constrictor, a symbol of evil in the jungle around him.

Although treated better than across the frontier, in Russia, both Jews and Ukrainians were under-privileged in the old Austro-Hungarian empire. Mutual hostility was certainly bad for both, and writing like this could not have been entirely healthy. But Franko was prolific and may have written to better purpose elsewhere.

L. CROME.

SCI-FIC

The Garin Death-Ray. Alexei Tolstoy. (FLPH, unpriced.)

The Land of Foam. Ivan Yefremov. (FLPH, unpriced.)

FOR "sci-fi" addicts, Tolstoy's book is of interest as demonstrating the Soviet tendency to more or less factual probability—rather than comical or poetical flights of fancy—even in this free-for-all genre. That is to say, the Soviet school of sci-fi derives from Jules Verne rather than de Bergerac or H. G. Wells, and belongs to what British publishing would call "borderline SF", being very nearly straight novel-writing, except that the story is set a little in the future, or that some degree of time-travel into the past is involved.

In this instance, however, a note of satirical jocularity runs all through the fast-moving tale of quasi-alchemy, get-rich-quick enslavement, slick organisation, international piracy, *war-what-for?* and a final *so-there!* anti-climax.

The multinational horde of workers who excavate the clay which they believe will turn into gold are given free issues of jam, liver salts and strong drink. They are actively encouraged to wear national costumes and have feuds—once a month *only*, on their day off. The big boss, Death-Ray Garin, having terrorised most of the world and dislocated the entire global economy, proposes to put most of the human race behind barbed wire and proceed apace with "mental castration". "History went galloping forward, its golden-shod hoofs clattering over the skulls of fools."

However, super-monopolist Garin is ultimately left gathering prawns and drinking brackish water on a tiny coral atoll, impotent and barely alive, thanks, surprisingly enough, to dear old nature.

As for the time factor, we have here what we addicts know as a "warp": all this is what *might* have happened if . . . if, that is, someone *had* invented a death-ray in Leningrad in 1920, before the creation of the Soviet Union; if the capitalist world *had* become entangled in a "gold panic" and internecine convulsions while the Soviet Union was still too young to

NOTE

All FLPH translations reviewed above are available on loan from the SCR Library.

play any major part in international affairs.

The book is well written and exciting (for those who like the sci-fic genre), though at times confusingly rapid. It is also very pleasingly printed, in good black ink on a soft matt paper, with a very legible modern type-face.

The Land of Foam is a well-written and imaginative novel which in a few introductory pages presents us with a magnificent blue-green beryl-like cameo, reposing scarce-noticed in a Leningrad museum, and then runs back thousands of years to tell how the carving came to be made and what story is embodied in the four exquisite figures on the transparent stone.

Romantic, poetic, high-minded and packed with picturesque detail, this tale reminds one of Kingsley's *Heroes*, Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*, and in general of the whole complex of classical and antique legend and mythology. Those who enjoy the half-real, half-fabulous atmosphere of such legends as Theseus and the Minotaur, or Jason and the Golden Fleece, will find Mr. Yefremov's book agreeable and very evocative. Children in the ten-twelve age-group might enjoy it very much indeed, if the taste for this kind of storytelling still survives here.

S.J.G.

AN INTERESTING COLLECTION

The Golden Rose. K. Paustovsky. (FLPH, unpriced.)

ARE these stories?—essays?—vignettes? Paustovsky's elusive and allusive pieces are hard to place, wandering here and there through many shades of emotion, of memories, of reflections. Not profound, not complex or subtle, yet tender, wistful, evocative—they mirror the pensive, kindly mind of a man absorbed by human fellow-feeling.

There is an artistic flaw in the writer's insistence on pointing the moral at the conclusion of every incident. As the Russian proverb has it, this is *buttering butter*; it is also an anti-climax, and unflattering to the reader's imaginative understanding.

The title-story is about an old dustman who for years sifts specks of gold from a jeweller's rubbish-bin, until he has enough to make a talisman for an unhappy girl, only to find her long since gone away. It is a delicate and touching incident: Paustovsky might have left us alone to savour its bitter-sweet cloudy contradictions, its *joy and pain woven fine*. But he perversely cold-showers us with abrupt, chilling abstractions on the nobility of the writer's art. In the context, his worthy sentiments seem mere irritant discords.

Once again it is to be regretted that a stilted, straight-jacketed translation—and in particular a wholly unnatural turn of dialogue—should too often make the subdued harmonies barely audible, the soft colouring evanescent. Those unpractised in reading *through* that mystical jargon called “translatese” may find some passages heavy going, or even unintentionally comic.

S.J.G.

SLAVONIC STUDIES

Oxford Slavonic Papers, Vol. VII, 1957.
(Clarendon Press, unpriced.)

THIS latest volume, under Professor Konovalov's discriminating editorship, continues to provide students of Russian history and literature with stimulating and unusual reading.* The two subjects are combined in an Indian writer's well-documented essay on Gerasim Lebedev (1749-1817), the first Russian Indologist and the first to create a theatre in Bengal. By a coincidence, as the author notes, valuable extracts from Lebedev's papers (previously unknown or believed lost) were published by *Istoricheski Arkiv* after Mr Dasgupta's article had reached the proof stage. Professor N. K. Gudzi, of Moscow University, the greatest authority on early Russian literature, contributes a specially written article on his subject. *The Russia Company and the Government, 1730-42*, by Mr N. C. Hunt, is an important pioneering study in a neglected field. Professor Konovalov adds to his previous seventeenth-century publications a further series of seven letters to James I by Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich, the first Romanov monarch, and by his father the patriarch Philaret, between 1613 and 1623. Amateurs of esoteric symbolism in poetical form will find a selection of verses by the émigré religious mystic Vyacheslav Ivanov (1866-1949), together with an interpretation in French by an admirer.

A.R.

* A Soviet appreciation of the first seven volumes of the Oxford Slavonic Papers is published in the current SCR History Bulletin, Vol. V, Nos. 1 and 2, price 3/- (3/6 post free).

THE VITAL LETTERS

Russell, Khrushchev and Dulles: Letters. Ed. Kingsley Martin. (MacGibbon and Kee, 7/6.)

KINGSLEY MARTIN, Editor of the *New Statesman*, is to be congratulated on obtaining for his paper the vital letters of Russell, Khrushchev and Dulles. The unique correspondence, now published in book form, started with an open letter from Bertrand Russell to Eisenhower and Khrushchev in which he sought to persuade them to admit that their

common interests were greater than their differences. Russell argued that in war today there can be no victory and that the rival ideologies arising from the Declaration of Independence on the one side and Marxism-Leninism on the other can still run their course in world competition without leading to world war.

Khrushchev in his answer said: "There can be no doubt that the easing of tension in international relations does not depend on the USSR and the United States alone. Other countries too, including, of course, Great Britain, must make their contribution to it." He goes on to say that the transformation of Britain into an American base for nuclear and rocket weapons will bring no good either to world peace or to Britain's own security. In fact a situation was being created whereby Britain might become a spring-board for the unleashing of war against the Soviet Union. If, as the result of an incorrectly understood order, death-dealing weapons of war were used from American military bases, a crushing retaliatory blow would follow immediately.

Dulles shows his deep suspicion of the Soviet proposals, and fails to answer the points put forward in Bertrand Russell's letter; he ends by saying: "It is the steadfast determination of the United States to work in a spirit of conciliation for peaceful solutions based on freedom and justice of the great problems facing the world today."

Bertrand Russell in his final word says of Mr Khrushchev and Mr Dulles that they appear as rival fanatics, each blinded to obvious facts by mental blinkers.

Soviet News Booklet 29 has published *Efforts of the Soviet Union towards Summit Talks*, which could be read with advantage at the same time as the vital Letters.

MONICA WHATELY.

HOW LIFE BEGAN ?

The Origin of Life on the Earth. A. I. Oparin.
Tr. Ann Synge. (Oliver and Boyd, 35/-.)

THIS is a new translation into English of the third revised and enlarged edition of a book which has already in the space of some twenty years profoundly enlarged the boundaries of scientific thought. The origin of living things has puzzled men for centuries, but thought necessarily remained speculative until the scientific data required to solve the problem had been accumulated. The exciting thing that Oparin did was to show that science could put forward a reasonable hypothesis to account for the origin of life on the earth by the operation of the known laws of matter, acting through a long period of time in the kind of conditions that probably existed. He based his

theory on a consideration of the actual history of the material development of the earth together with a brilliant survey of the comparative biochemistry and metabolism of the living organisms found today.

Oparin's theory became widely known following the English translation of the first edition of his book in 1936. It is now, I think, very generally accepted among scientists as a reasonable and fruitful hypothesis. This is shown by the very large amount of additional confirmatory material which Oparin includes in this new edition—the results of the scientific work of the past twenty years, some of it directly stimulated by his views.

The first publication of this work was a landmark in thought comparable in some ways to the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. This new edition is greatly to be welcomed. The general reader and the specialist will equally find it clear and stimulating, while the specialist will be grateful for the detailed bibliographies to the various sections, but most of all for the attempt at a unified treatment of a vast range of facts which conventional text-books treat as unrelated phenomena.

The translation by Ann Synge is both elegant and accurate. A.G.M.

FOR BALLET LOVERS

Ballet School of the Bolshoi Theatre. Y. Bocharnikova and M. Gabovich. (FLPH, priced.)

THIS delightful book by Yelena Bocharnikova and Mikhail Gabovich, principal and art director of the famous Bolshoi school, throws into clear focus the tremendous amount of study required before any aspirant can hope to enter the ranks of dancers in the Bolshoi Ballet. They are both graduates of the school and write with loving care and humour of the many activities regulating the life of student dancers, from the searching medical and artistic examination of children wishing to enter the school to the even more exacting test of artistry and technique when finally the student emerges into the larger world of the theatre.

Throughout the authors stress the valuable links forged between school and theatre from the beginning of the training, for not only do the youngest children appear in opera and ballet, but the artists themselves are in constant contact with the work of the school, either as teachers or members of the examining body assessing the yearly progress of each student. It is in this way that the traditional principles of the Russian method are maintained and enlarged as each new choreographer makes still further demands. Thus the students become aware of the distinction to be made when

dancing in a classical, romantic or modern ballet, between real folk dance and the so-called academic character and court dance, between conventional mime and that form of expressive movement now more generally used.

In fact both Madame Bocharnikova and Mr Gabovich convince the reader that it is this constant attention to the details of all types of dance and mime which turns the student into a dancer of style and expression worthy of joining the great Bolshoi company. But perhaps the most important point that the authors make is not so much the wide range of subjects studied, but the need of each student to see himself as an individual as well as a member of a large group, so that when the time comes he is ready to step into any role. "Ceaseless work, strong will and extensive artistic interest are the things without which there cannot be artistic progress" were words spoken by the greatest Soviet dancer, Galina Ulanova, to Raissa Struchkova after one of her first performances. This book proves that the Soviet dancer does not strive alone, but from the beginning artists, teachers and students work together to achieve one end—the production of yet another artist.

JOAN LAWSON.

A GREAT SCULPTRESS

Vera Mukhina: *A Sculptor's Thoughts*. (FLPH, unpriced.)

THIS book on the life and work of Vera Mukhina is well illustrated and, in addition to the introduction by D. Arkin, also contains a short autobiography of Vera Mukhina and some of her speeches on art and sculpture, in which she expresses herself very forcibly and clearly. Obviously she held very definite views on the subject. She gives an interesting description of the growth and development of her best-known work, the sculptural group on the Soviet pavilion at the 1937 Paris World Fair. I remember the group; in fact it is the only example I have seen of Mukhina's work, and it was particularly interesting to see the Soviet pavilion with this group of two figures with uplifted arms, opposed by the German pavilion with its heavy, squat emblem of the Third Reich over the entrance. I remember comparing the two and saying to a friend: "At any rate the Soviet group is pointing to heaven."

Mukhina gives an interesting account of the technology involved in creating and building up these colossal figures (which are about eighty feet in height) from her own working model, which was only one-fifteenth full size. This was carried out by a group of engineers in nickeliferous chrome steel (stainless steel).

Vera Mukhina's many portraits are full

of vigour and variety. It is difficult to judge sculpture from photographs, but, although they look extremely competent in the way they express the character or individuality of the sitter, they give me the impression of being a little superficial in modelling—and indeed, in my opinion, most contemporary portraiture, in painting as well as in sculpture, suffers in this respect when compared with the work of the masters. Possibly she is really more interested in the decorative treatment. As she herself says: "We must find a new and decorative way in which to end a bust."

In general, her work is full of vitality. Almost invariably it has a strong dramatic quality, which is due, no doubt, to her early training in France and to her association with the French sculptor Bourdelle.

She is always searching for new ideas and new materials, but her work in general strikes me as being basically conventional and traditional in the sense that it would take its place quite naturally in any European city, whether Moscow, London, Paris or New York, but to my mind one of her last works, *We Demand Peace*, a loosely designed group of six realistic figures, gives the impression of being rather banal and sentimental, however sincere her inspiration was, and, in my opinion, falls very far behind much of her earlier work.

Although I have expressed my views somewhat critically, I am nevertheless filled with admiration for her work, and from the collection of illustrations in this book I have singled out the following works executed, more or less, during a period of ten years, when she was, I suggest, at the prime of her physical and mental powers.

Apart from the pavilion figures I have already mentioned, and her well-known *Peasant Woman*, which was executed in 1927, there is a beautiful back view of the half-length figure of the ballerina *Marina Semyonova* which was done in 1941; a good head of a *Partisan Girl*, 1942; a powerful portrait of *Lieutenant-General Nikolai Burdenko*, surgeon 1942-1943; and a bust of *Captain N. Stolyarov*, *twice hero of the Soviet Union*, 1947.

Many of the other busts could equally well be included in this list. Finally I would refer to the scale-model for the Gorky monument, which, although it is dramatic with its defiant pose and vitality, also appears to have the static quality which, in my opinion, is so essential in monumental sculpture.

She was born in 1889, and as her list of works ends in 1952 I presume that she died in that year at the age of sixty-three.

GILBERT LEDWARD.

YOUTH TAKES A HAND

Young Remakers of Nature. (FLPH, unpriced.)

I FIND this book most interesting in the way it deals not only with the habits of plants, animals and fruits, but also with how man has progressed through hard study and experiments. One would think it is impossible to grow fruit trees in the arctic regions and in weedy and stony wastes, but through the young naturalists and scientists (according to this book, which I have no doubt is absolutely true) man has been able to do these things. One chapter I find very interesting is the young naturalists' study of rabbits, how they found out that according to the rabbits' diet their fur straightened or curled.

DAVID MORTON (aged 11).

MOSCOW IN 3-D

Inside Moscow. Three View-Master Reels. View-Master (England) Ltd. 15/-.

VIEW-MASTER, producers of colour three-dimensional pictures for the View-Master stereoscopic viewer, have brought out their first set of reels about the USSR, entitled *Inside Moscow*. The set consists of three reels with seven colour stereoscopic slides on each. The colour is very good and the choice of scenes is well divided between the architecture of many of the main buildings, historic and modern, and the life of the people in public places. Many aspects of Moscow are included—the golden domes of the Kremlin churches, the snow-white towers of the new university, the palace-like splendour of the Moscow metro, and the people—at the Dynamo Stadium, shopping, and at the beach.

The three-dimensional effect makes you feel you are really on Red Square! But you wish the Bolshoi dancers would move.

The set makes a charming souvenir (provided you have a viewer). Can be recommended as a Christmas gift.

E.T.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Mirgorod. N. Gogol. (FLPH, unpriced.)

The House on the Square. E. Kazakevich. (FLPH, unpriced.)

Restless Old Age. L. Rakhmanov. (Soviet Weekly, 2/-.)

Buse and Her Sisters. Ieva Simonaityte. (FLPH, unpriced.)

The Oral Art and Literature of the Kazakhs of Central Asia. T. G. Winner. (Duke U.P./Cambridge U.P., 45/-.)

Moscow Art Theatre: A Symposium. (Soviet News, 2/-.)

Rays from the Depths of Space. G. Zhdanov. (FLPH, unpriced.)

Soviet Kazakhstan. P. Alampiev. (FLPH, unpriced.)

Revolution Museum. P. Berezov. (FLPH, unpriced.)

Moscow. O. Constantini and H. Hubermann. Intr. N. Poetzgen. Tr. G. A. Colville. 30 colour plates. (Panorama Books, Barmerlea Book Sales, 18/6.)

State Historical Museum: Short Guide (FLPH, unpriced.)

The Party System. M. Beloff. (Phoenix House, 2/6.)

The Essence of Democracy. M. Cranston. (Phoenix House, 2/6.)

The Decision to Intervene. G. Kennan. (Faber and Faber, 50/-.)

On the Further Development of Collective Farm System and Reorganisation of the Machine and Tractor Stations. N. S. Khrushchov (FLPH, unpriced.)

Education in the USSR. F. Korolev. (Soviet News, 6d.)

Katorga. B. Roeder. (Heinemann, 21/-.)

If the Arms Race Were Stopped. M. Rubenstein. (Soviet News, 3d.)

Soviet Trade Unions. Andrei Verbin. (Soviet News, 6d.)

The Soviet Union in 1960. (Soviet News, 6d.)
The inclusion of a work in this list neither implies nor precludes subsequent review.

SCR Diary

THE outstanding event of 1958 in Anglo-Soviet cultural relations will undoubtedly be the visit of the Moscow Art Theatre to London. It was a great artistic experience in itself, bringing to life for many what they had read and imagined from books about the Soviet theatre in general, the MAT in particular, and about Stanislavsky. SCR was honoured to be able to present members of the company at a public meeting on June 10, where they talked about their work and their approach. Held in the afternoon at the Livingstone Hall, Westminster, so that members of the theatrical profession could attend and ask their questions, the meeting was highly successful. Mr. V. Toporkov, a senior member of the company who was in London with them though not taking part in their productions, spoke about Stanislavsky's way of rehearsing. Mr. Joseph Raevsky (producer of *The Three Sisters*) and the actors Mr. Nikolai Alexeev (Andrei in *The Three Sisters*), Mr. Vladimir Belokurov (Lopakhin in *The Cherry Orchard* and Kuprianov in *Restless Old Age* [Troubled Past]) and Mr. Pavel Massalsky (Gaev in *The Cherry Orchard* and Vershinin in *The Three Sisters*) answered questions from the audience. Both actors and producers spoke fluently about their "system" and strongly defended their interpretation of Chekhov. They rejected quite firmly any idea that theirs is a producer's theatre, emphasising that it is pre-eminently an actor's. And they did their best to lay the hoary legend about the length of time the MAT rehearses a play.

A number of questions concerned the training of young actors. The questioners could scarcely have received more authoritative replies, for Mr. Toporkov, who answered them, is chairman of the all-union jury that reviews the passing-out plays of final-year students of Soviet theatrical schools.

MAT Luncheon

MEMBERS of the MAT company were guests of SCR at a farewell luncheon at the Kensington Palace Hotel on Friday, June 13. Members were able to chat informally with our guests before and during luncheon; the animated hum of conversation was gratifying to the organisers. Present on this occasion were Mr. Alexander Solodovnikov, director of the theatre (and a member of the board of the USSR-Great Britain Society), Miss Margarita Anastasieva (Elena Andreevna in *Uncle Vanya*), Miss Olga Androvskaya (Maria Lvovna in *Restless Old Age*), Mr. Sergei Lukyanov (Lopakhin in *The*

Cherry Orchard, and not unknown to filmgoers for his roles in *Kuban Cossacks*, *Donets Miners*, *The Big Family* and *The Rumyantsev Case*), Mr. Pavel Massalsky, Mr. Joseph Raevsky, Mr. Victor Stanitsyn (producer of *The Cherry Orchard*), Mr. Sapetov (assistant director of the company), and Mr. V. Toporkov.

Miss Mary Merrall, proposing the toast of the Moscow Art Theatre on behalf of the Executive Committee of SCR, thanked them sincerely as an actress for the pleasure they had given us during their tour. Replying, Mr. Solodovnikov said the MAT had been happy to make this contribution to Anglo-Soviet cultural relations and hoped their visit would further mutual understanding.

David Oistrakh Trio

IT was a further honour and pleasure for SCR that the Music Section was able to present the David Oistrakh Trio (David Oistrakh, S. Knushevitsky and Lev Oborin) at a meeting at 14 Kensington Square on May 16, where they spoke about the Chaikovsky violin and piano competition held in Moscow in March and April of this year, and answered questions from a predominantly musical audience. Sir Arthur Bliss, who had been a member of the jury for the piano competition, presided and spoke warmly of the pleasure it had given him. All speakers praised the genius of the winner of the piano competition, Van Cliburn (whom we had the pleasure to hear later in June at the Albert Hall with the Soviet conductor K. Kondrashin). Mr. Oistrakh also spoke highly of the playing of Miss Beryl Kimber, of Australia, who had won a certificate of honour and a cash prize in the violin competition. Mr. Wilfred Lehmann, who had also won an honour certificate in the violin competition, said that conditions for competitors had been all that could be wished for, and took the opportunity to thank Mr. Oistrakh and the organising committee for the cordial reception they had had. Mr. Oistrakh reiterated the hope (expressed by Mr. Shostakovich on another page of this issue) that there would be more entrants from Great Britain in the next Chaikovsky competition in 1962.

Films

BOTH the films shown at SCR private showings on April 25 and June 24 (*The Power of Gold* and *The Sisters*) were entered by their studios in the recent first Soviet film festival (of which Mr. Daglish writes on p. 20). *The Power of Gold*, the first feature film of the Sverdlovsk

Studios, and adapted from a play and stories by D. Mamin-Sibiryak, did not figure among the major awards; but *The Sisters* (G. Rozhal's adaptation of the first book of Alexei Tolstoy's trilogy *The Road to Calvary* [*Ordeal*]) received a second prize.

In the *Sovetskaya Kultura* poll on 1957 films, *The Sisters* had come second in the voting to *And Quiet Flows the Don*, and just ahead of the Cannes winner *The Cranes Are Flying*. Actress R. Nifontov, playing the part of Katya, the elder sister, had been second in the poll for the best actress.

Two Meetings

DR. Bertha Malnick gave an interesting talk to members at the beginning of May on the Moscow Art Theatre, which whetted the appetite for what was to come and was fully justified by the event. Mr. Victor Glasstone, who had visited the USSR with Dr. Malnick in the SCR theatre group in 1957, showed photographs of Art Theatre productions which he had taken in the theatre in Moscow.

At the beginning of June, Mr. Ralph Parker, the ASJ Moscow correspondent, and Mr. Robert Daglish, both holidaying in London, spoke on current trends in Soviet cultural life. The audience received an impression of a more lively and controversial atmosphere than they had imagined to exist; and not a little of the liveliness and controversy spilled over into the questions and discussion. During the evening Mr. Parker passed round photographs he had brought with him of the work of a young Soviet artist, Ilya Glazunov (see *Soviet Weekly*, June 26, for reproductions of some of his work).

Soviet Tourists

SEVERAL groups of Soviet tourists have visited Britain during this summer under arrangements made between Intourist and British travel agencies. SCR was able to entertain some of the groups on May 21, June 11, July 24 and August 13, and make it possible for members to make personal contact with them. The visitors have been of various professions—doctors, lawyers, teachers, trade union officials, librarians, journalists and writers, museum workers, and engineers of different specialties. They have come from points as far apart as Lithuania and Vladivostock; one party contained a big group from Novosibirsk. From Vladivostock came a retail salesman who had won his trip to Britain as a prize in socialist competition. In addition to the personal contacts facilitated in this way, SCR has been able to arrange for some of the tourists to visit places of interest to them outside the scope of their tour.

Book Display

IN connection with the visit of the Moscow Art Theatre, a display of English and Russian books about the theatre, Stanislavsky, Nemirovich-Danchenko and actors of the MAT was held throughout May and early June at 14 Kensington Square, together with a display of photographs. All the books shown are held in the SCR Library and are available to members and students of the theatre.

Children's Art and Literature

THE Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries has formed a section for children's art and literature. The section would welcome contact with organisations, institutions and individuals concerned with the aesthetic education of children and with writers, musicians, actors and film workers whose work and talent are devoted to the needs of children. "In the interests of becoming mutually acquainted with the best works in children's literature and art," the section writes to SCR, "we could exchange literature for children, musical scores, art exhibitions, photographic material, documentary, cartoon and other films, plays and scenarios. In our view, it would also be useful to arrange exchanges of opinion and information relative to the position of children's literature and art and the aesthetic education of children in both our countries."

The chairman of the section is the well-known children's writer Sergei Mikhalkov. Among members of its committee are Samuel Marshak, Kornei Chukovsky and Lev Kassil. The secretary of the section is M. Ermolaeva.

The formation of the section has been brought to the attention of organisations and individuals interested in this field. Readers who would like to get in touch with the section may do so through SCR or direct to its secretary at 16 Kalinin St., Moscow, K9. Both SCR and the section would welcome suggestions for developing contacts.

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